



## Stop Karachi City Government from evicting poor people

A massive demolition drive against informal settlers is taking place in Karachi City in Pakistan. The city government calls it an anti-encroachment drive to beautify the city. It will demolish more than 20 villages or informal settlements which will net for the government some 450 acres of prime urban land.

For the past four months some 2,940 houses have been demolished. A recent addition was the violent demolition of 250 houses in Sikander Goth (village) where the government employed many policemen, paramilitary and soldiers. A community activist was shot dead while four others were arrested. The bloody incident provoked poor communities to hold protest demonstrations which the police and military dispersed with baton charges, gunshots, and tear gas. Four activists were killed and hundreds injured. The MQM (Muttahida Qaumi Movement) is the party in power in the Sindh province and Karachi. When it was out of power, it portrayed itself as the defender of the people, including their human rights. On several occasions the MQM made representations with the UN Commission on Human Rights to protest the issue of human rights violations in Pakistan. Now it is in power and mouthing the slogan of destroying the people's communities to beautify Karachi and making it on par with other modern megacities. Many suspect the real motive is to grab the land from the poor people in the city. The MQM government does not consult the affected people and civil society. Those evicted were not given notices, compensation and alternative housing. For our friends in Europe and North America please get in touch with the MQM addresses listed below by visiting/protesting at their offices. Our friends in South America, Asia and the Middle East will find resonance in the struggle of the poor people in Karachi, so please join in the letter campaign (fax and email). Exposing this in the media will be very useful. Below is a sample letter. Thank you in advance.

Ted Anana  
Coordinator Eviction Watch - ACHR  
SAMPLE LETTER  
Mr. Altaf Hussein, MQM International Secretariat  
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**Stop Karachi City Government from evicting poor people**

Dear Mr. Hussein, Our organization received very disturbing information from civil society organizations and the news media that in the past four months, the Karachi City government destroyed over 2940 houses. Recently, on 22nd April 2006, the City District Government Karachi (CDGK) demolished another 40 houses in Allah Wali Colony Block 6, PECHS Jamshid Town Karachi. More recently on the 5th May 2006, the Karachi City Government demolished 250 houses in Sikander Goth and will demolish another. One community activist was shot dead and another seriously injured when police opened fire on a demonstration of the residents whose houses were demolished. Police arrested a number of community activists. The cleared village land will be constructed a high rise building for middle income housing. The builder's private guards were also used to demolish the houses. These operations have left thousands of families homeless, rendering many children, elderly and the infirm vulnerable to sickness. This operation has destroyed assets worth millions of Rupees of very poor people. There were no prior notices given by the government to these families, neither were they compensated or given alternative plots of land or houses. The government has no plans to compensate these families or offer them alternative living places. Many of these communities have lived there for well over twenty years, and have invested time and resources in acquiring basic amenities like water, electricity, etc. You are of course aware, that this is a cruel and inhuman act aimed at people for no reason other than that they are poor. You are aware that forced evictions are considered gross violation of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing by the United Nations. Pakistan was one of the first to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which ensures that every child, should have a decent place to live. Evicting these families your government has violated Article 6 (1) and (2); Article 16 (1) and (2); Article 24 (1) and Article 27 (1) and (3). Furthermore, the government of Pakistan has committed itself to the global plan of action of Habitat II, in 1996, which recognizes the right to adequate housing, condemns forced evictions and encourages a humane way of dealing with poor squatter families. The Karachi City Government is an MQM government. When the MQM was being persecuted by the military and other governments, you and your colleagues regularly campaigned at the UN citing the various human rights abuses perpetrated by the government on your party. Your party made several representations at the UN Human Rights Commission meeting on these human rights abuses. Now that your party has come to power one would expect that it respects human rights of all and especially of the poor. We appeal to you to intervene and stop the forced evictions that are taking place under an MQM government. While we understand the desire to beautify the city of Karachi, however all development should be undertaken with broad consultation with all groups, especially those affected by projects. We urge you to ask Mr. Syed Mustafa Kamal, City Mayor of Karachi City District Government to immediately stop the evictions, rehabilitate those that have already been evicted and to hold dialogues with the affected communities, NGOs, academics and civil society groups on how this problem could be resolved. Respectfully yours,

Name Organization Country Cc Mr. Miloon Kothari UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing Room



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