



PRESS PACKET

ALL PAKISTAN ALLIANCE FOR KATCHI ABADIS

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I. AN APPEAL TO THE MEDIA

“They want to evict us from our homes!”

At the beginning of this year, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) announced its decision to conduct a series of operations against kachi abadis in Islamabad. Several kachi abadis have been identified in this respect, including several Muslim and Christian abadis, housing close to 100,000 residents who live and work in the Capital city.

The background for this mass eviction plan lies in a Islamabad High Court order (during the hearing of a petition by a kachi abadi resident who was having trouble convincing NADRA to issue him a CNIC based on his kachi abadi address) to the CDA to clear all ‘illegal slums’ in Islamabad. The vaguely-worded court order did not take into account the legal framework surrounding kachi abadis in the country and has not yet been followed up by a court judgment, which could be studied or challenged.

Following this arbitrary order, the CDA drew up a plan for operations involving the police and other concerned departments in the capital, following which residents of kachi abadis started being threatened with eviction through notice and visits by the local police and bulldozers. Authorities have begun to cut water and power connections from the back. And, the CDA and officials of the Interior Ministry are now regularly issuing threatening statements to the media calling kachi abadi residents – including thousands of women and children - ‘terrorists’ and ‘criminals’.

Scenes of women and children standing on the rooftops of their shanty homes flooded the papers in May, when bulldozers and a massive contingent of police officers showed up at the I-11 basti threatening eviction. Similar scenes have occurred before, and given the threatening statements issued by the katchi abadis, they will likely occur again until the situation is solved once and for all. In November 2013, over 2000 katchi abadi residents showed up in a rally demanding the right to a roof over their head. And, **on June 3, the APAKA plans to launch its second, major rally, as it marches to the Supreme Court from Blue Area in Islamabad.**

In the face of these renewed threats, tens of thousands of kachi abadi residents are once again under threat of being summarily evicted from their homes. This is in flagrant violation of the constitutional right to shelter and the National Housing Policy 2001, which sets out clear rules for kachi abadi regularization and consultative resettlement, none of which are being followed by the CDA. Instead, the working poor of Islamabad are being demonized, as ‘terrorists’, ‘criminals’, and ‘outsiders’. Kachi Abadi residents are being threatened with the use of force as if they were convicted criminals worthy of collective punishment.

As members of the All Pakistan Alliance for Kachi Abadis;
As residents of the Kachi Abadis of Islamabad;
Along with members of the Awami Worker’s Party and other supporters:

We demand that these immoral, illegal, and criminal attempts by the CDA, police, IHC, Interior Ministry and the state in general must be ceased immediately!

We appeal to the media to take up our cause!

Sincerely,

All Pakistan Alliance for Kachi Abadis
Awami Workers Party, Islamabad
May 28, 2014

II. OUR DEMANDS

1. ***Stop the eviction drives!***

We demand an immediate halt on all activities aimed towards the eviction of Kachi Abadi residents from their homes.

2. ***Stop calling us criminals, terrorists, and miscreants!***

We are the working class men and women of this city and citizens of this country and demand to be treated with dignity and respect.

3. ***Stop calling us “Afghans” or “Foreigners”!***

The government has used this pretext to bulldoze down our houses in the past. We are citizens of this country and demand to be treated as such.

4. ***Start a dialogue with us!***

We demand open and inclusive dialogue between the Alliance and Kathci Abadi residents on all current and future plans.

5. ***Respect the National Housing Policy 2001 and other relevant laws!***

The government, as per its policies, must make proper engagement of improving our current abadis or alternate housing schemes or allocation of plots. Other laws must be reformed to make them pro-poor and pro-working class.

6. ***Register all Kachi Abadis of Islamabad!***

The CDA currently only recognizes 11 abadis. We want the CDA to give official status to all Abadis.

7. ***Register the “missing” homes in already registered Abadis!***

The old surveys conducting in the registered abadis missed several families, confused large multi-family households with one family and made single plot allocations. This is not an acceptable solution. The government must update its records within reason and with due consideration to natural increases in household sizes.

8. ***Provide us with electricity and gas connections!***

The government, as per the constitution, must treat us as equal citizens and provide us with electricity and gas connection.

9. ***Provide clean water, sanitation, schools and health facilities!***

Treat us as equal citizens and provide us with these facilities.

III. THE ISSUE

The CDA, the courts, and the current government have launched a misinformation campaign against the residents of the Kachi Abadis of Islamabad. Their goal is to create a bad public image of the abadi residents, often through media, and then proceed with their immoral, illegal, and violent plans of evictions. They commonly classify the Abadi residents as “criminals”, “foreigners” and “terrorists”. They call the settlements “illegal”. They call the brutal eviction drives as “cleaning drives” as if the abadi residents are not humans but pests and cockroaches. These acts of violence, driven by the interest of the moneyed classes are made invisible as “Aman, Salamti, and Behtari”¹ projects.

We are calling out their lies. We wish to inform the media about the real issue. We provide the legal, political, and historical context to the issue of kachi abadis in Islamabad and beyond.

What are Kachi Abadis

The issue of informal settlements is linked to the phenomena of urbanization, migration, and urban poverty in general. This is by no means an issue specific to Pakistan.

Slums: A Global Phenomenon

“Fifty percent of the global population lives in urban areas”²

“Between 2000 and 2010, the number of slum dwellers in the world has increase by six million each year.”

“By 2030, 2 billion people will be living in slums.”

A growing number of the global population, especially in Asia and Africa, are living in slums. The world largest slums are in Cape Town, Mumbai, Nairobi, Karachi, and Mexico City. The rise in urban poverty is being driven by neoliberal capitalist expansionist policies. These policies uproot communities and create incentives for urban migration to provide large reserves of cheap labor. Increased incidents of violent conflicts and environmental disasters also result in increased urbanization.

The poor and working classes are forced by these broader dynamics to live in informal settlements, kachi abadis, and slums. They have no provision of clean water, sanitation, electricity, and other basic necessities.

Kachi Abadis of Pakistan

“Half of Pakistan’s urban population lives in slums.”³

“Only 1/3rd of the annual housing demand is being met in Pakistan”⁴

“A quarter of the housing demand gap is met by the emergence of new Kachi Abadis”⁵

“According to March 23, 1985 Policy, there were 2,460 Identified Kachi Abadis among them 2,184 were to be regularized having a population of 5.10 million living over an area of 36,022 acres in Pakistan.”⁶

The case in Pakistan is no different. While these informal settlements started emerging right after partition, especially in Karachi, their numbers shot up when rural to urban migration increased in the 1960s and 1970s. The trend has continued. In recent decades, mega-disasters such as the 2005 Earthquake, the 2010-12 floods, and the conflict, wars, and military operations have also resulted in permanent migration to urban center.

The increased rate of urbanization has resulted in an urban population of over 40% in Pakistan. Half of this urban population lives in kachi abadis.

Islamabad and Kachi Abadis

“Out of an estimated 34 Kachi abadis of Islamabad, only 11 are registered by CDA as per the National Housing Policy 2001”⁷

“Almost 150,000 people in Islamabad city live in Kachi abadis”

Since the development of Islamabad in the 1960s, the capital city has experienced an unprecedented degree of urban expansion, capitalist growth, economic, post-conflict and post-disaster migration and increased poverty. One of the symptoms of this development path has been the expansion of informal settlements or Kachi abadis across the city. These abadis are home to some of the most socially and economically marginalized sections of the city’s population, including the working poor and large numbers of religious minorities. The slum residents are, in many ways, integral to the Capital’s economy, providing a steady, local source of labor for jobs and services crucial

to Islamabad’s development, health and upkeep (often in professions – such as domestic help, sanitary work and wage labor – unpalatable to Islamabad’s better-off residents).

However, most of the residents of these slums have tenuous ownership and control over their homes, livelihoods and lives at large, given the perennial threat of eviction and the often-arbitrary exercise of coercion and violence by the state, against which they possess little social or legal protection. The residents also lack, to a large extent, the basic public services that the rest of the city takes for granted, such as clean water, reliable electricity, gas, sanitation, schools, roads and infrastructure. Many of the resident populations, particularly those from minority groups, are further faced with discrimination and systematic social exclusion from the wider society that surrounds them as well as capricious intimidation and incarceration by the police, further inhibiting their opportunities for socio-economic mobility and a peaceful, dignified existence.

Relevant Laws and Legislation

While CDA and other government officials are quick to use the term “illegal settlements” for the Kachi Abadis of Islamabad, this is the further thing from the truth. A set of laws and policies determine the status of Kachi abadis in Pakistan. These policies not only determine the status of Kachi abadis, but also provide guidelines for dealing with the Kachi abadis related issues.

The Zulfikar Ali Bhutto regime of the 1970s is considered as the first to pay attention to the issue of low-income housing. They introduced slum improvement programs and purchased land for low-income housing. In 1978, the Zia regime made commitments for providing housing rights for Abadis with more than 100 houses. The Junejo government reduce this to 40 houses in 1986 with a cutoff date of 23rd March 1985, i.e. only abadis with more than 40 houses before this cutoff date were regularized. No significant steps were taken during the democratic interregnum of the 1990s.

Regularization

Regularization of all Kachi abadis with more than 40 houses before a cut-off date.

Cutoff date: March 23, 1985 –*National Policy on Kachi Abadis, Urban Renewal and Slum Upgradation 2001*

Cutoff date: Dec 31, 2011 –*Punjab Kachi Abadi Act, 1992 (updated in 2012)*

“Most of the non-regularized Kachi Abadis of Islamabad have more than 40 houses. These could be regularized if the cutoff date is updates, as in the case of provinces.

In the 1990s, provincial Kachi abadi acts were passed that legislated that all informal settlements on provincial land of over 40 houses settled before 1985 would be considered legal. The Punjab Kachi Abadis Act, 1992 was extended in 2007 by the Pervaiz Elahi-led PML-Q government and then in 2012 by the Shahbaz Sharif led government. This meant that *the dates for regular status to be granted were extended from 1985 to December 31, 2007 and then December 31, 2011*. A similar move was witnessed in Sindh where the chief minister partook in granting 100 years leases to informal settlers in the province.

Eviction

Eviction is strongly discouraged in the relevant laws and the National Policy on Kachi Abadis

Eviction, without resettlement plans is not allowed in the policy.

The resettlement plans must also include the will of the residents.

The government will provide trunk infrastructure and services on incremental basis through public sector organization.

For the purpose of Islamabad, the National Housing Policy, 2001 and the National Policy on Kachi Abadis, Urban Renewal and Slum Upgradation 2001 are two very important documents. These set the registration cut-off to 1985 with 40 house minimum limit. The policy discourages eviction, disallows evictions without resettlement plans. Resettlement plans must include the will of the residents. And in case of resettlement the government will provide trunk infrastructure.

What do these legal, historical, and political details mean?

Some points must be highlighted here.

- 1- Kachi Abadis emerge due to the complex phenomenon of urbanization, migration, and increasing urban poverty. The only “crime” here is the crime of neoliberal capitalism with its profit-seeking drives that thrive on keeping a class of people poor and oppressed.

- 2- The continual emergence of Kachi Abadis is an aspect of the socio-economic system. Policies must take these into account.
- 3- The settlements are not “illegal” but are regulated by laws and acts.
- 4- These laws and policies demonstrate that the CDA and other relevant authorities are engaging in immoral and perhaps even illegitimate eviction drives.
- 5- Officials have also displayed criminal negligence by not providing for the basic needs of Kachi abadi residents.
- 6- These laws have various problems and short comings. Apart from the issue of the cutoff date, Kachi abadis are not allowed commercial space, not allowed houses above 5 marlas, and are pretty much condemned to always remaining Kachi abadis, until the government decides that it wants to displace them.
- 7- It must also be remembered that the legislation did not come in a political vacuum. The Zia regime began demolition operations in the late 70s, which were resisted strongly by Kachi abadi dwellers. Come the mid-80s, the military-led government understood that it would have to woo the mostly PPP supporting settlements towards the puppet political party it was creating in Punjab, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. The 1985 policy was a “votes for regularisation” policy, which played a critical part in making Nawaz Sharif chief minister.

Issues specific to Islamabad:

When it comes to the issue of eviction drive in Islamabad, the CDA and relevant authorities have used lies and excuses to shun off their responsibilities. Three of their claims are:

- 1- The evictions are targeting those abadis where resettlement and plot allotments have already been made.
- 2- The evictions are carried out in “Afghan abadis”
- 3- The evictions are targeting terrorists and criminals

All three of these are lies and excuses that the CDA uses to present a soft and good image for itself.

1- On evicting those abadis that have already been ‘relocated’

There are two important things to consider.

First, as stated above the growth of Kachi abadi is a reality that cannot be denied. Increased urbanization results in both the emergence of new Kachi abadis and densification of older ones. For instance, some of the abadis have seen new migrants come in after the mega-disasters and military-militant conflict in FATA and Swat. This fact needs to be incorporated into resettlement plans.

Second, the registration and surveys of the 11 abadis missed out many families. This happened due to surveying errors. In particular, classifying a single housing complex within with multiple families reside and allocating them a single 3-marla plot is a common issue in the abadis that have been registered and offered resettlement plans. And not all the families that are given a registration number have been given a plot.

We demand that all abadis with 40 or more houses be registered, regardless of the cutoff date.

We therefore demand that the resettlement plans for the 11 abadis be renewed based on consultations, negotiations, and meetings with local abadi residents, as per government's own policy.

2- The evictions are carried out in “Afghan abadis”

The CDA has specifically targeted a few abadis on the pretext that these have Afghan citizens living in them. For instance this has been the basis for CDA's eviction drive in the I-11 Kachi abadis. There are two points to consider here.

First, the abadis do not have a large number of Afghans living in them. Most of these have already been relocated to different refugee camps. While before 2006, there were a large number of Afghans living in Islamabad, these camps were closed. In 2009, CDA worked out a relocation plan with UNHCR and Around 3,000 Afghans were moved from the I-11 Kachi abadi to a location in I-12. According to a recent survey by UNHCR only 10% of the 8,000 residents of I-11 abadis can be classified as Afghans.

Instead, most of the people living in I-11 abadi belong the Mohmand, Bajaur tribal agencies, Mardan, Peshawar, Charsadda and other parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. These residents have NIC cards and regularly cast votes in the elections. They

have repeatedly taken this issue of 'citizenship' in court and successfully obtained stay orders against CDA's eviction drives.

The recent order by the Islamabad High Court, seems to have taken a single case of an abadi resident without an NIC and declared a sentencing of collective punishment on the whole abadi.

We demand that the CDA and IHC stop displaying this blatant disregard of the rights of ordinary Pakistani citizens.

We demand that the issue of Afghan refugees be amicably resolved in consultation with the abadi residents, UNHCR, and other relevant authorities.

3- On security threats and terrorism

It is sufficient to point out here that while the PML-N government is eager to negotiate with Taliban groups and sponsor many militant sectarian outfits, it is unwilling to speak to the abadi resident. The use of the term "terrorist", "criminal" and "security threat" are strategically meant to throw off the media and general public from the real issue.

If there are any criminal elements in the abadis, these must and can be dealt with according to the normal application of law. The Capital city is filled with white collar criminals, drug traffickers, cheats, and thieves of a wholly different class and scale. It is filled with those whose policies in FATA, Swat, and Balochistan, foreign policy matters vis-à-vis our neighbors have intensified extremism in the country. It is ridiculous, criminal, and immoral to point to Kachi abadis as the source of our security woes.

We demand that the government and law enforcement agencies work with the abadi communities to deal with the small number of criminal elements.

IV. OUR STRUGGLE

The All-Pakistan Alliance for Kachi Abadi is an association of slum-dwellers from across the country, originally formed in 2003 during Musharraf's era. Created to protect the rights of the millions of Kachi abadi residents across the country, the Alliance was the first nationally-organized resistance by slum dwellers in Pakistan against arbitrary eviction and forced homelessness by the state and was instrumental in securing basic rights for slum dwellers across the country and forcing much-needed political spotlight on the need for sustainable solutions for low-income housing in Pakistan.

The Alliance members include residents and representatives from these abadis of Islamabad: Farash town, Muslim Colony (bari imam), Iqbal Colony (G7 markaz), Maskeen Musharraf Colony (G8), France Colony (F7), Sau Quarter (F6), I-9 colony, Phatak Colony (H-11), I-11/1 abadi, I-11/2 abadi, I-11/4 abadi, Meher abadi (G11/F11), and others.

Members of Awami Workers Party (AWP) and National Students Federation (NSF) are also part of the alliance.

Our activities – What we do:

The All Pakistan Alliance for Kachi Abadi in Islamabad, assisted voluntarily by members of the Awami Workers Party, is working with residents of over 14 slums in the city with a collective population of approximately 150,000 people, along four main lines of action, for which support, collaboration and funding is required.

1. Consciousness/Awareness-Raising:

The APAKA organizes regular meetings, discussions and work sessions with groups of men and women in different abadis that focus on the following activities:

- a. Disseminating information about past and present government policies, actions and initiatives.
- b. Dialogue about the economic, social and political power structures that exist in the country and beyond.
- c. Raising awareness about the political and legal rights of the abadi residents, as slum-dwellers and citizens of Pakistan.
- d. Outlining the need for peaceful social, political and community organization beyond religious, sectarian, ethnic and gender differences.

2. Organization:

The APAKA supports Kachi Abadi residents in building and strengthening existing forms of community organization, in order to help them resist illegal and unjust attempts at eviction and create a sustainable organizational structure for the future

defense of their rights and positioning of their lawful demands (for instance, related to access to basic services, security and physical improvements of the settlements). Within each abadi, the APAKA is working with slum residents to form local organizational units (including special women and youth units) and develop internal mechanisms of communication and coordination. In the process it is fostering collaboration between Kachi abadi residents, civil society, students, academics, leaders from previous movements and the organized landless from other parts of the country, creating spaces for discussion, joint-lobbying strategies and mobilization.

3. Communication:

The APAKA is implementing activities aimed at creating sustainable communication networks and information dissemination mechanisms within Kachi abadis, to enhance their capacities to engage in concerted collective action for securing their rights. To do this, the Alliance is focusing on strengthening the abilities of youth and women's groups to utilize means of communication, expression and information dissemination, such as wall painting, informative pamphlets, and the use of social media and information and communication technologies. The APAKA also diffuses information externally in mass media (print, internet, radio and television), student networks, and social organizations nationally and otherwise, to generate awareness and public support aimed at influencing government decisions and future policies regarding the distribution of land, shelter, public services and other critical resources.

4. Influencing decision-making at local and national levels:

In order to actively influence governmental decision-making regarding the provision of affordable housing and land to the deserving as required by the constitution and the dire situation on the ground, the APAKA is planning two main courses of action over the following months:

- a. In the short term, social and political mobilization, through the organization of a Rally on Land Rights, to coincide with date for the Supreme Court's hearing of the Awami Workers Party's petition for a judicial review of previous rulings on land reform. This rally will involve both Kachi abadi residents from the twin cities as well as organized landless farmers from South Punjab.
- b. In the medium-to-long term, the APAKA is attempting to facilitate and the active participation (both as voters and candidates) of Kachi abadi residents in the upcoming local bodies elections, with a view to securing adequate and proximate representation for Kachi abadi residents in local government and strengthening marginalized voices in public decision-making in the process.

V. FURTHER READING

SELECTED ARTICLES

[Attention Deficit](#) | Umair Javed | 26 May 2014 Dawn

[The Truth About Katchi Abadis](#) | Ahsan Kamal | 6 April 2014 The News

[Of Collective Punishments and Dubious Excuses](#) | Jacqueline Beruman | 5 April 2014 Express Tribune

[Islamabad's Stain](#) | Hashim bin Rashid | 24 Mar 2014 Dawn

[Islamabad targets slums after suicide bomb attack](#) | Jon Boone | 19 March 2014 The Guardian

[Protecting the Voiceless: Katchi abadi residents to resist eviction](#) | 12 February 2014 Express Tribune

VI. CONTACT LIST

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¹ Aman, Salamti, aur Behtari is the title of the CDA project which includes, among other things, eviction drives.

² Table 6, *Global Urban Indicators*, UN-HABITAT, November 2009; url:
http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/global_urban_indicators.pdf

³ Table 7, *Global Urban Indicators*, UN-HABITAT, November 2009; url:
http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/global_urban_indicators.pdf

⁴ Arif Hassan, *Housing for the Poor: Failure of Formal Sector Strategies*. 2000. City Press

⁵ Arif Hassan, Housing: Lessons from the urban housing demand-supply gap in Pakistan, 2004, *IAP National Symposium on Housing*, Lahore. http://arifhasan.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/P10_Lessons-from-Urban-Housing-Demand-Supply-Gap.pdf

⁶ AHKRC, 2010, *Shelter for the Poor: Legislation and Enforcement- A Case Study of Islamabad*. Akhtar Hameed Khan Research Center, Islamabad

⁷ AHKRC, 2010, *Shelter for the Poor: Legislation and Enforcement- A Case Study of Islamabad*. Akhtar Hameed Khan Research Center, Islamabad