



HOUSING AND LAND RIGHTS NETWORK

Habitat International Coalition

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**Subject: Ongoing forced evictions resulting from the construction of
Diamond Bar Island on two Islands of Sindh, Pakistan**

Dear Madam/Sir:

HIC-HLRN has recently received disturbing information from our partners at the Asia Coalition for Human Rights and local organizations in Pakistan about Emaar Properties intention to develop luxury apartments, resorts, etc. This project will affect the livelihood of 500,000 fisherfolks and their families. It will most certainly displace thousands of people as they will no longer be able to sustain themselves. This project will also destroy forever the delicate environment of mangroves, and the Indus river delta, the irreplaceable flora and fauna.

It is regrettable to know that Emaar has signed an agreement with Government of Pakistan to construct Diamond Bar Island City on two Islands Dingi and Bundaar (Bundal and Buddo), near the Karachi coast. This project has generated a wave of deep concerns and resentment among civil society organizations, mainstream political parties and marginalized fisherfolk of the country. Although Emaar is a world renowned construction firm, undertaking such controversial project in Pakistan has raised serious concerns about the company's professional integrity. We would like to share here some critical facts about the project that will help you understand the seriousness of matter.

Pakistan Mahigeer Tahreek (Pakistan Fisherfolk Movement), a movement for securing the rights of poor fishermen has launched a campaign against the decision of constructing cities on the Islands as illegal, immoral, antipoor and antinature. We feel that selling these islands is tantamount to depriving poor fishermen of the Sindh coast from their fishing grounds and mangrove nurseries, thus eroding their remaining meager livelihood resources. Some 4,000 to 5,000 fishing boats use Korangi and Phitti creeks. Moreover, these passages to the open sea are located on both sides of the islands, which will become inaccessible in the wake of so called "development" on the islands.

The Islands are home to rich flora and fauna of the Indus River Delta. It is one of the few remaining tracts

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of healthy mangroves of the roosting and breeding grounds of various migratory and resident birds. The breeding grounds of the endangered marine Green Turtle exist on Dingi and Bundaar Islands. This rich biodiversity will lose its existence in the wake of proposed development. The islands are part of resource-rich ecosystem of Indus Delta, which has been included in 200 ecoregions by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the islands are also identified as part of High Priority Areas of conservation interest by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Regrettably the government is not willing to undertake any consultation with the likely affected persons of this project and has not even conducted an Environmental Impact Assessment, which is mandatory under Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997. This shows complete disregard toward the livelihood resources and biodiversity reserves of the country.

In addition, the international community has recognized forced evictions as gross violations of the human right to adequate housing as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and human rights treaties such International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). The Government of Pakistan has ratified all of these treaties. The legally binding obligations arising from the treaties are clearly defined in UN instruments elaborating the obligations of state to respect, protect and fulfill human rights, including the General Comments on the right to adequate housing and on forced evictions issued by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the guidelines on displacements issued by the United Nations Council on Human Rights through its Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Miloon Kothari.

Civil society groups of Pakistan have expressed serious concern over this ill-conceived project. They consider this project a violation of all fundamental principles of sustainable development. In brief this project is threatening the livelihood of about half a million fishermen along Sindh coast and will bring irreversible damage to the rich ecosystem of the two islands. In spite of severe opposition by political, social and environmental organizations, the government is bent upon implementing the project and physical work has also been started by cutting mangroves and leveling of sand dunes.

We want to convey our grave concern about the project and to make it clear that the people of Pakistan, in general, and people of Sindh Province, in particular, are bitterly and rightly opposed to this project.

Considering that Emaar is among the leading construction giants of world, we would like to request you to avoid indulging in a project which brings your corporate image at stake. Emaar may earn profit of millions of dollars from this project but will pay a huge cost of its business image and people of world would count your organization among profit-thirsty business entities.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

We look forward to hearing from you about your constructive response.

Please be assured of our highest consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Schechla', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joseph Schechla,
Coordinator