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## Rebuilding Karachi-bulldozing one livelihood at a time

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*Master of Science in Journalism*



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# **REBUILDING KARACHI; BULLDOZING ONE LIVELIHOOD AT A TIME**

This report is submitted to the Faculty of Journalism as partial fulfillment for Masters of Science in Journalism degree

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Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi, Pakistan

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Spring Semester 2019  
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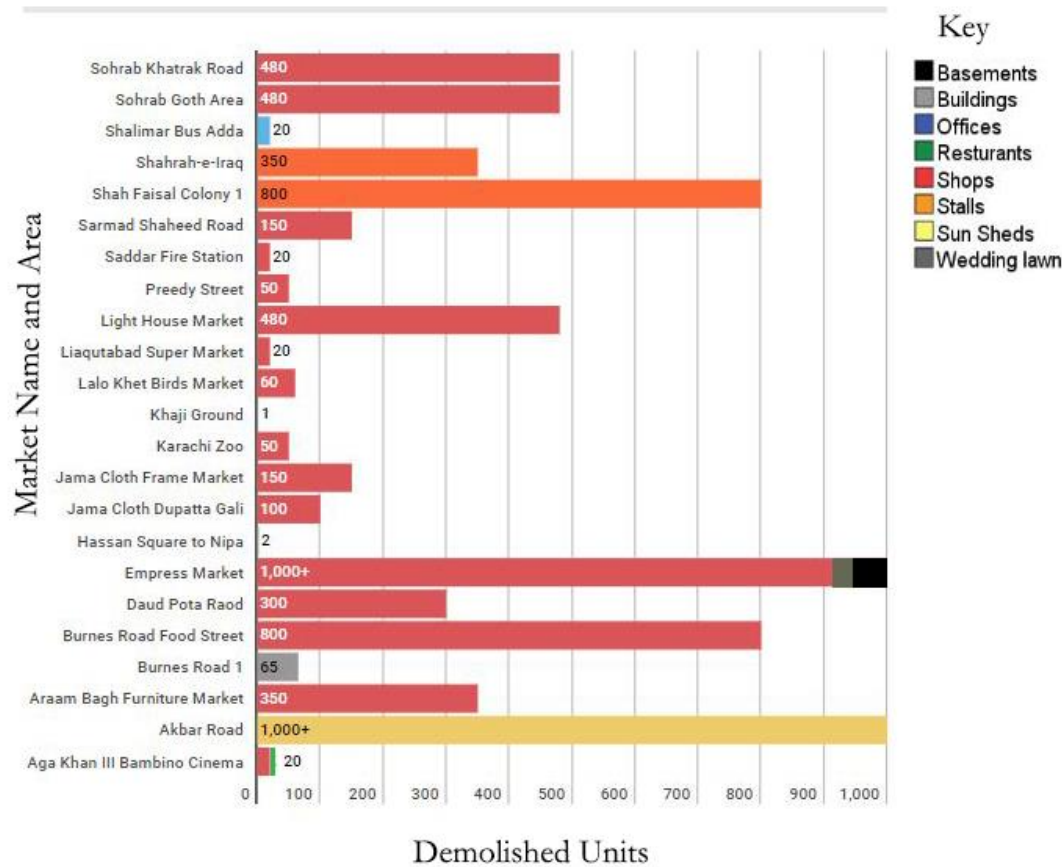
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# Empress Market & other Markets, Karachi Commercial Evictions Chart 2018



## **List of Abbreviations**

1. Karachi Circular Railway (KCR)
2. Pakistan Industrial Corporation Development (PIDC)
3. Defense Housing Authority (DHA)
4. Urban Resource Centre (URC)
5. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
6. Institute of Business Administration (IBA)
7. Karachi Urban Transport Corporation (KUTC)
8. Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC)
9. District Municipal Corporation (DMC)
10. Nadirshaw Eduljee Dinshaw (NED)
11. Ear Nose Throat (ENT)

## Abstract

The story revolves around Pakistan's powerful mafias who illegally occupy state and private property, mostly in urban areas and unclaimed land. They are backed by the police, bureaucracy and politicians. This is a norm in countries where these encroachers occupy a piece of land for as long as they want without any legal right or documents. These encroachers occupy the property for weeks, months or even years before voluntarily leaving it for a better spot or being forcefully evicted by city authorities. Saddar, the city's center; is considered a safe haven for these land grabbers. For decades the heart of Karachi's commercial hub has been encroached by illegal occupiers. According to the Global Index report (2018), published by the Economist Intelligence Unit, Karachi is among the 10 worst cities in the world to live in. Examples of how the poor meet their everyday livelihood requirements can be seen in Karachi's Saddar area in the form of encroaching on spaces by local vendors and hawkers. The story also highlights all the harm development projects do to the people of the city with the KCR affected - Gharibabad colony – as a case study.

Keywords: *encroached, Gharibabad colony, Empress Market, Karahi*

## Chapter 1

### The Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) Stories

Each morning at 6:30, when Taj Buner, 55, leaves the congested house that his father built decades ago, he worries that the railway tracks connecting this strip of encroached land that belongs to the Pakistan Railways will be taken back from him and he will not have a house to return.

Buner, a driver at a house in Defence, an affluent neighborhood located on the other side of the bridge having large houses, perfect landscaping and wide, unsullied roads, lives with eight other men on room sharing in a 30 by 20 quarter. He recalls that his family has lived in Gharibabad for generations. Now, his home is in peril, wrapped with fancy terms like ‘revival’ and ‘development’, any day his house would be bulldozed in front of his eyes.

With the “revival of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project” in full swing, the government fails to provide an alternative to the people residing on the land affected by the project, one of which is unfortunately, the Gharibabad colony located under the Pakistan Industrial Corporation Development (PIDC) bridge.

Gharibabad is a neighborhood littered with garbage, dotted with rubble of demolished houses and a *nullah* that is flowing from the periphery of the Supreme Court of Pakistan into the same strip of dirt where the KCR, one of Karachi’s most ambitious and divisive infrastructure projects, has been shaping up.

“Yes, this land belongs to our ancestors,” Buner said. “But, they are going to take it away one way or the other.” (Buner, 2019)

In November last year, work to clear the KCR route started on the orders of the Supreme Court, the same time around, removal of ‘encroachers’ had been taking place in the Empress Market, in the heart of Saddar. Hawkers and extensions of commercial businesses along the roads and footpaths were removed as part of the anti-encroachment drive.

Immediate steps to revive the KCR project and clear all encroachments on the Pakistan Railways' land in the metropolis were given by Justice Gulzar Ahmed in a meeting he held at the apex court's Karachi registry.

In the meeting it was found that parts of the encroached land were owned by the Pakistan Railways that it now needed back to revive the KCR project. The order was issued to clear the metropolis of such encroachments on land that belonged to the Pakistan Railways with the help of the local bodies.

The top court strictly directed the authorities to speed up the process, taking on-board the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) and cantonment boards to clear encroachments. Not only were housing on the radar of demolitions but any shops or stalls that were built on that land were ordered to be removed too.

Being displaced due to development projects is not something new to the *katchi abadis* in Karachi. What is new is the absence of an alternative action plan to move an entire community struggling with the impacts of such developments taking place in the city.

"We are going to lose our entire heritage, all our culture," lamented Buner, pointing out to a young man standing nearby, "he was born in front of me. I have seen him crawl, go to school and now take up the responsibilities of his household." (Buner, 2019)

Displacements due to development projects in the city have been traumatic and dehumanizing. The displaced people's livelihood, their family, kinship systems, cultural identity and informal social networks are adversely affected and disrupted. Lack of policy framework and social securities has made them insecure and psychologically weak. Financial compensation is never enough to sustain their livelihoods. The assurances by the government almost always differ from reality which then leads to tragic consequences.

Buner points towards a pile of rubble dumped at the entrance of the colony, putting in context of what might happen with all of them in a couple of days.

"This was a barber shop that was taken down a few months ago to scare us so that we leave our homes," he said fearing that soon all of this will become history.

The name of the colony ‘Gharibabad’ is derived from two words ‘*garib*’ meaning poor and ‘*abad*’ which stems from the word ‘*abadi*’ meaning colony. The word translates into the ‘colony for the poor’. The meaning is evident not only by the class that calls it home but also through their living conditions.

“It is the responsibility of the State to provide shelter, food and other necessities of life to every person,” said Zahid Farooq, who works at the Urban Resource Centre (URC) in Karachi. “You cannot just displace them without providing an alternative,” he added.

Buneri and other residents of the Gharibabad Colony do not mind development in their area. The 21-day eviction notice has made them uncertain about their fate. “The government needs to arrange an alternative for us,” he said.

They have no choice but to clean up the broken concrete and twisted metal themselves that has been lying there for months.

Buneri earns for a family of six, who live in Swat where he hails from. “I miss them. I want to be with my wife and children but how can I call them here? Where would I keep them?”

This fear of being displaced has kept Buneri away from his loved ones for nearly a year now. “I wanted to visit my family in December last year but could not. What if they had come during my absence and demolished my house?” he questioned. (Buneri, 2019)

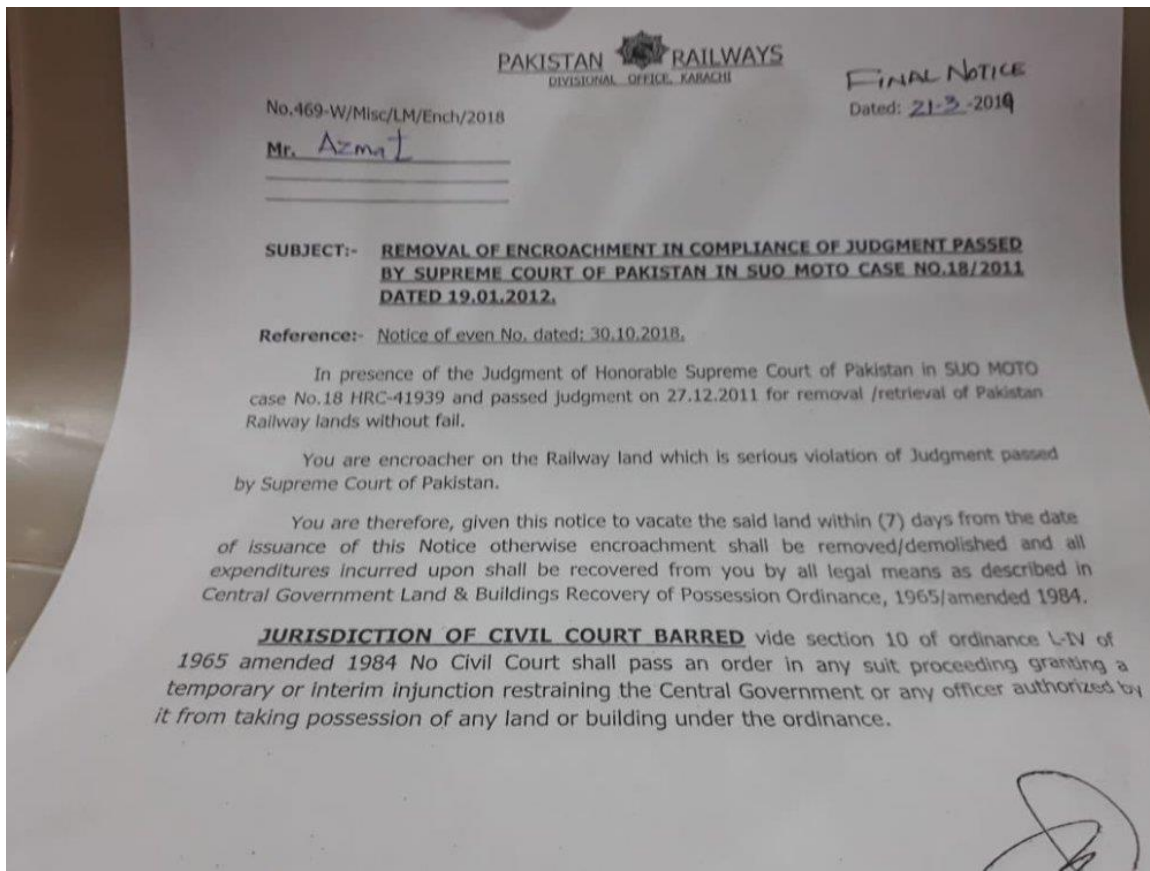


PHOTO: Eviction notice issued to the residents of Gharibabad that states vacating the encroached land within seven days from the date of issuance i.e. March 21, 2019.

The Pakistan Railways announced the intention to remove illegal structures, issuing eviction notices to a few colonies settled across the KCR track in compliance with the orders of the Supreme Court, one of which is the Gharibabad colony near the PIDC area. The residents of Gharibabad colony are ordered to vacate the land voluntarily before the drive officially begins.

The eviction notice states: “You are [an] encroacher on the railway land which is serious violation of judgement passed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan.” It gives a deadline of seven days to vacate the space and warns that “otherwise encroachment shall be removed / demolished and all expenditures incurred upon shall be recovered from you by all legal means as described in Central Government Land & Buildings Recovery of Possession Ordinance, 1965/amended 1984.”

According to a survey conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 2013, around 4,653 illegal constructions will be demolished as part of the anti-encroachment drive to clear the land for the KCR project. This included houses and shops. However, the figure is likely to be much higher now since it has been six years to the survey and the population has also increased in the city, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) population survey, 2017.

The city administration has been reluctant to demolish the houses since the Sindh government has not prepared a resettlement plan for these residents. The city administration is fearful of public retaliation if residential encroachments are demolished. “The aftershocks of this drive are underway and they are rapid,” said Arif Hasan, an urban planner, who is an expert on the port city of Karachi. “We will have displaced people and developments that only cater to one class.” (Hasan, 2019)

With the authorities finally gearing up to clear the encroachments along the KCR track, there are fears that the exercise will ultimately backfire in the absence of a proper resettlement plan.

“The problem is complex,” said Dr. Nausheen H. Anwar, the director of Karachi Urban Lab – a research organization housed at the Institute of Business Administration’s (IBA) Social Sciences department. Discussing the eviction notice, she said that they were sent “without any steps taken by [the] state to resettle hundreds of people who will be displaced.”

“You do not want to wait until people have lost their homes, until they are displaced and have no choice but to encroach another piece of land,” Dr. Anwar said. “The idea should be to plan ahead and provide people with some measure of choice,” she added. (Anwar, 2019)

A resettlement plan for the KCR affected people was developed in 2011 by the Karachi Urban Transport Corporation (KUTC) in accordance with the JICA environmental guidelines that acknowledged the residents as affected persons. The resettlement plan was one of its kind as it was proposed as a test on how to respond to demolitions caused by such projects in the most dramatic circumstances without tearing communities apart.

“We never saw the resettlement plan coming to life as setting a precedent for the rest of the country,” said Farooq, who monitors the KCR project closely at the URC.

The Karachi Commissioner, Iftikhar Shalwani said, “The local government has to remove encroachments along the 43 km long KCR track for the work to begin on the project that has been put on hold for too long.” On his visit to some stations, he noted the poor state of the tracks and ordered that they should be cleared. According to Shalwani, the government plans on clearing about 360 acres of encroachments. (Shalwani, 2019)

The city administration has been holding its plans and efforts for the removal of encroachments along the KCR’s track for the past two years due to the absence of a resettlement plan for those who will be affected by the exercise, according to the Director of land and anti-encroachment, Bashir Ahmed Siddiqui.



*PHOTO: The Municipal Office, one of the oldest buildings in the city. It is office to the Mayor Karachi, Wasim Akhtar and the Director of Land and Anti-Encroachment Cell, Bashir Ahmed Siddiqui*

Sahira Bano, 35, sees nothing but a bleak future in these tracks. She lives with her husband and two children in a small one-room built parallel to the railway tracks.

“My house is my happy place; my safe haven. I run this house financially by doing chores at other people’s houses,” said Sahira while talking about how whenever an eviction notice comes their way, it is the women who suffer the most.

“How can I be happy when my heart is not? This house holds a special place in our lives. I turned it into a home,” she said with a quiver in her voice. “My kids ask me every day if we are going to lose our home. What am I supposed to tell them?”

Bano said it was her way of supporting her man. “I will lie on the railway tracks with my kids if they try to displace us. Dying is better than living on the streets and seeing your life fall apart right in front of your eyes,” she said, trying to choke back her tears. (Bano, 2019)

An anti-encroachment operation was carried in the Gharibabad colony months ago but it failed due to protests by the residents. Anti-encroachment operations in other areas were also only partially successful and were eventually abandoned due to political pressure. The KCR track stretches along 43.2 kilometers which includes the main line of the Pakistan Railways with 24 stations.

Like Buner and Bano, residents of the Gharibabad colony do not want to leave their dwellings. Attachment to the place runs deep. Parents and grandparents lived there; it is familiar and their own. Old and well-earned distrust of the government hangs over all efforts and a bitter dispute with the Pakistan Railways over land has thwarted efforts to unite behind a plan.

“There is nobody I talk to who wants to move,” said Shafqat *Chacha*, 70, a lifelong resident of the Gharibabad colony, who has erected handwritten signs at the entrance of the colony declaring his refusal to leave.

“I do not know who is in charge of all this but, please tell him I will only leave on four shoulders now,” said *Chacha*.

Previous resettlement efforts dating back to the construction of the Lyari Expressway failed after they became mired in logistical and political complications. The authorities are facing all the same challenges, illustrating the limitations of resettlement on any larger scale for the KCR affected people.

Dr. Noman Ahmed, an architect who has chronicled Karachi's urbanization for years, claims that there were some formulas that were devised previously by allocating a plot of between 60 to 120 square yards to the affected people of the Lyari Expressway.

"A cash compensation of about PKR 50,000 was also offered to the displaced people of Lyari Expressway," he said. (Ahmed, 2019)

"This is not just a simple matter of moving happily to a place where they are embraced by new beginnings," said Farooq, emphasizing on the intensity of the matter of resettling the displaced.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Encroachment of public spaces, a continuing nuisance in the Empress Market**

The Empress Market was constructed circa 1884 and was named after Queen Victoria, who was the Empress of India, to deter local residents from building a memorial there for the executed rebels. Thus, the name traces its origins from the British Raj era in the subcontinent.

The market was strategically constructed at this site in a square courtyard enclosed by four covered halls and a clock tower, making it visible from afar. It was not always a spice or a commodities market. During World War I in 1857, the site was used to execute soldiers and behead them. The land has historical significance also.

Today, the market is one of the most important economic hubs in the city where spices, fruits, vegetables, pets and different species of birds are sold. Even after skyscrapers and modern shopping malls sprang up around Karachi, Empress Market remained more or less the same, drawing shoppers of all income levels from all over the city.

The stalls came crashing down in November 2018, when bulldozers razed them overnight without any prior notice. After being notified of the demolition plan only fortnight, the hawkers, in protest, refused to leave and demonstrated right up until their stalls were knocked down.

The apex court ordered that encroachments be removed from the Saddar area within 15 days on October 27, 2018 before the operation was extended to the rest of the city, shifting from phase one to phase two. The Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC) along with the District Municipal Corporation (DMC) and other civic bodies started demolishing shops and illegal structures in the area. Signboards exceeding the mandated dimensions were also pulled down as part of the anti-encroachment campaign.

Mayor of Karachi, Wasim Akhtar said the plan was to transform the Empress Market into a site that is easily accessible by the public without the barrier of encroachments.

“Even if the government wants to revitalize heritage sites they do not really have a plan,” said Dr. Noman Ahmed, Dean at the Department of Architecture and Planning at the Nadirshaw Eduljee Dinshaw (NED) University. (Ahmed, 2019)

The Empress Market has seen it all; from the execution of soldiers during the British era to the ongoing demolitions and restructuring of the site today. It marks as one of the busiest sites in Karachi and also an attraction for foreigners who are interested in photography.

“The Empress Market and the clock tower are sites that are not found elsewhere in the city today,” said Dr. Ahmed.

The story on social media and local news, however, is not the same. Prime Minister Imran Khan announced setting up a new ‘Karachi Master Plan 2047’, Muhammad Toheed, an Urban Planner at the KUL tweeted on April 1, 2019 questioning if setting up a master plan is a domain of the Federal or Provincial government?

Toheed has been closely working on the anti-encroachment drive since it began in November last year. According to a survey conducted by the KUL in collaboration with the URC around 11,000 shops and stalls across some 20 markets have been affected, upending the life for thousands of families.

According to Toheed, the people affected by the anti-encroachment drive were mostly from the working class. “They usually work on daily wages and cannot afford to shift to a new locality as rents are high in other parts of the city,” he said. (Toheed, 2019)



*PHOTO: Encroachments that were removed from the footpaths as part of the anti-encroachment drive conducted by the KMC in October, 2018 around the Saddar area are seen coming back.*

Evidently, these demolitions have left the affected hawkers displaced and at the mercy of God. The helpless shopkeepers said that a verbal agreement with the Karachi Commissioner was agreed upon according to which they should have been given a couple of days to remove their goods, spices, etc. from the shops. That, however, was never honored.

If the law had been assiduously applied from the beginning, such an extreme way of getting rid of these encroachments would not have been necessary. Had a reasonable grace period would have been given to the affected vendors, so many of these livelihoods would have not been threatened.

The metropolis bares the weight of a huge population dependent on dwindling resources and a crumbling infrastructure.

“Karachi has become an urban nightmare with these demolitions taking place all in the name of development,” said Hassan, who has researched about the place extensively.

The Mayor agreed that had it not been under the KMC’s supervision, these encroachers would have not grown to this extent around the city.

“Illegality cannot be condoned but such a ruthless enforcement of the law is discomfiting,” said Hassan.



*PHOTO: Ibrahim Memon, 60, still awaits the KMC to fulfill its promise of providing him with an alternative after the demolition of his ancestral shop at the Empress Market.*

“They bulldozed my shop; my second home before my eyes.” Ibrahim Memon, 60, called the Umer Farooqi Market, another market near the Empress Market area which was brought down as part of the anti-encroachment drive, his second home.

With hope that is fading with each passing day, he said, “I wish I had not lived to see this day because in any case, I have lost the only source of income I had since 1958.

“I used to sell comforters and mattresses in a tiny stall,” said Memon whose shop was demolished to build a recreational park and museum that is undergoing construction as he narrates his story sitting in a congested street adjacent to the Umer Farooqi Market.

The pile of rubble that is visible from where Memon sits now is a reminder of more than a decade that he has spent in the market. “My grandfather was the first to work in this market — he sold spices back then — and now it seems like I will be the last of my clan,” said Memon.

“All of us shopkeepers were confident that we would be given enough time to pack our stuff but that never happened,” he said on getting no response from the officials who used to collect rent from him every month.

Vendors like Memon were charged between PKR 5,000 to 8,000 for each shop without giving any receipts in return. “How can they call us illegal while charging for it?” Memon questioned the KMC.

Calculating the total amount of loss all the shopkeepers have suffered by the crashing down of the Umer Farooqi Market, Memon said that they have lost merchandise worth five million rupees.

“For days, we would just look at the debris that was lying there and think of ways of to recover whatever we could,” he said.

Memon recalls the day of the demolition of the market, “There were loud cries and sounds of pleas that echoed in this area; the same market that was known for its everyday hustle bustle.” (Memon, 2019)

According to Siddiqui, “We had informed the shopkeepers about the drive in advance to minimize all losses.”

Muhammad Ayub Khan, the former President of Pakistan passed the West Pakistan Municipal Committees (Property) Rules in 1962 during his rule. He liked urban planning

and wanted to get rid of informal arrangements around mega cities like Karachi. The law enabled street-cart sellers in the city to gather in one place i.e. the Empress Market. Under the law the KMC leased out land to these ‘encroachers’, making them KMC’s tenants.

Memon’s father became one. “I was in my 20s when my father bought a shop in Umer Farooqi market, which was built by the KMC next to the Empress Market,” he said. As proof he has a bank draft from 1968 for PKR 2,500, which included an advance payment.

Dr. Kaiser Bengali, an economist commented on the topic by calling it an ‘economic genocide’. “These people and businesses are part of Karachi’s informal economy. This is an attempt to kill the informal economy system,” he said. (Bengali, 2019)



PHOTO: *The bird market which has now shifted to the adjacent side of the Empress Market.*

There are multiple layers of institutional responsibilities involved with the anti-encroachment drive in Karachi. “The Karachi and District Metropolitan Corporations are

responsible in the cases of commercial spaces being affected by the drive due to the jurisdiction,” said Marvi Mazhar, an architect and founder of the Pakistan Community Chowk Centre (PCCC). (Mazhar, 2019)



PHOTO: A displaced fruit seller in the Empress Market vicinity.

“It was my worst nightmare,” said Jameel Khan, a fruit seller at the Empress Market. “I saw the place where I have worked the majority of my life disappear right in front of me.”

The demolitions took place like a domino effect. Not only were the illegal tents and small stalls removed but also the tenants who paid rent to KMC came under fire. Hundreds of stall owners claim they are not ‘encroachers’ and have no link with the land mafia whatsoever.

“We have mouths to feed,” Muhammad Salman, a vegetable seller said. “What am I supposed to tell my children who do not see me bring seasonal fruits or meat anymore?”

In spite of the demolitions, some hawkers have resumed selling the wares in the rubble where their shops used to be.

Muhammad Ali, a meat shop owner said, “Do we have a choice? They can bulldoze over my dead body now if they want.”

“I am angry and frustrated. I do not know what to do. Each morning I look forward to coming out to set up my dry fruit stall. All these women are my friends; my confidante. We talk about our miseries and then laugh it all out. It makes me feel lighter,” Rani, who sits outside the Empress Market, said while discussing that her small roadside stall is not only a means of earning but, also a way of escaping from her life problems.

Mayor Akhtar says all stall owners with rental agreements with the KMC will eventually be rehoused. As for the rest of them, he said, “We cannot accommodate encroachers. They were sitting there illegally. We are following the rule of law.” (Akhtar, 2019)



PHOTO: *The Preedy street, another massively encroached area in Karachi.*

“I come here every week for my weekly groceries. I have been doing so since the past 30 years now.” said Taseer Khan who is a Lawyer by profession and resides in the Bath Island

area. The prices are comparatively high on that side of the city for a middle-class income man like Khan. “For about 3 weeks, it became such a hassle to do groceries because these hawkers are people I rely on for home goods. I felt looted when I bought the same stuff from elsewhere.”



*PHOTO: An everyday buyer and seller situation inside the Empress Market where the KMC's legal tenants have comeback due to loss of business and no other place to go.*

## **Chapter 3**

### **Karachi; the epitome of resilience and the worst city in the world**

Karachi has been ranked among the least livable cities in the world by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) 2018 — the research and analysis division of the Economist Group.

The city has been ranked 137th out of 140 cities on the list. The survey reads the cities based on different factors that include political, educational, social sustainability, healthcare, education and infrastructure.

“There are cities in Pakistan that are in far worse condition as compared to Karachi,” said Dr. Nausheen Anwar whose work focuses on the policy-making and planning processes in sustaining urban and regional inequality while discussing the livability index.

“It does not suggest that we should celebrate Karachi but, the story is far more complex than what the livability index is capturing,” she said. (Anwar, 2019)

A reason for scoring so low and making it to the bottom tier is the unavailability of adequate infrastructure and living aspects being severely restricted.

The city of lights has managed to be the 4th least livable city in the world – leaving behind Damascus, Dhaka and Lagos – respectively.

There is no footpath in Karachi that is free from an informal structure or is not home to a hawker. It has become an integral part of how life in Karachi appears. The question is: how do you justify a population of 15 million people, finding a space to run a business and call it a home at the same time?

Mayor Akhtar, however, is on a mission to change the fate of Karachi and those who call it home. On the ongoing demolitions he said, “Unlicensed businesses will no longer be allowed to operate on public property.”

He is tied by an order from the Supreme Court of Pakistan. “We need more open places in the city. These spaces are for people to sit in a garden, not for them to do their businesses and form land mafias,” he added.

The Mayor also hinted that these demolitions were a sign that the long lost glory of Karachi will make a comeback. “Spice and bird markets do not reflect upon the city’s culture and heritage,” he said. (Akhtar, 2019)

“This is an end of a historical era for Karachi,” said Dr. Noman Ahmed, who over the years has written extensively to revitalize the city. He further added that the authorities “have no concept of history and continuity. They are devoid of humanity.” (Ahmed, 2019)

Rebuilding the city means introducing it to new development projects or reviving the old ones like the KCR.

Who does not like development, especially when it comes to a city like Karachi, which is the heart of Pakistan (according to another recent sign).

Apart from the financial cost that these development projects are built on; there is a price that a common man in underdeveloped vicinity in the city has to pay, too. This price often results in terms of forced displacements which are sometimes priory given; many a time informed when a bulldozer is ready to bring down what they call their house or a means of their livelihood system.

The irony of the whole situation is that where is it aimed at developing or increasing the living standard of one class, the process automatically outs the already suppressed class; the lower income class, commonly known as the ‘poor’ in the city.

Instead of coming up with a formal resettlement framework, what is put on their empty hands are promises and promises as they say are made to broken and only the hearts of who those like Buneri and Memon can tell you how much it hurts when a promise is broken especially when it is the only thing that you are relying on.

## Chapter 4

### Let the law do the talking

Dr. Ahmed terms this ‘rule of law’ as a court order that is hanging like “sword on their heads”. “He (Mayor Akhtar) is saving his skin. A genuine demonstration of this initiative could have been done by the KMC on its own,” he said. (Ahmed, 2019)

The court order seems more like a word of God and not a court order as it makes the KMC and the government officials so powerless whenever asked why these demolitions are taking place now.

According to Dr. Anwar, land is another important factor in the ongoing demolitions around the city. “In the orders of clearing the encroachments on amenity plots and clearing land along the KCR, when we think about land, the dynamics change altogether and the question of stakeholder ship keeps popping from different angles,” she said.



*PHOTO: An everyday sight in Karachi where every corner is encroached: pedestrians making use of the footpath whereas the encroachers are using it as a means to run their businesses.*

Commenting on what Mayor Akhtar said about making it convenient for pedestrians, Dr. Anwar said, “In this context, the government is not thinking about acquiring land but, the focus is tourism, easy parking and quick navigation.” (Anwar, 2019)

According to the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, the Pakistani state has the power to acquire land for any public purpose upon provision of a just compensation.

The de facto law enforced in the country dates back to the colonial era and has not been revised ever since. The problem begins here because it does not take into account any provisions for resettlement or rehabilitation of those who are displaced when the land is acquired for ‘any public purpose’ as the law states.

The law is not only harsh in terms of its implementation but also restricts the definition of an ‘affected person’ to only those who are legally entitled to that piece of land.

Syed Muhammad Ali Shah, a resident of Gharibabad and a lawyer by profession, identifies himself as both a victim and an advocate of the re-settling of those in the KCR affected colony. He says there is room in law in the form of the Resettlement Ordinance, 2001 and a National Resettlement Policy, 2002, drafted by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency.

In case of forced displacements, the policy provides resettlement and rehabilitation to the non-title holders,” said Shah while discussing the 21-day eviction notice given to the residents of Gharibabad. “Those identified as ‘affected’ are now labeled as ‘encroachers’ in the notice. (Shah, 2019)

Nonetheless, the compensation scheme according to the centuries old land acquisition act is determined on the basis of the value of land, when acquired, disregarding the increase in price over time. Other factors like a change in social, cultural, economic, political and environmental landscapes of the affected persons are also not taken in account.

“In such a case, the affected persons or the encroachers, whatever you call them are clear losers,” says Shah. “Policies like the National Resettlement Policy, 2002 recompenses

affected persons for these additional factors but are unfortunately swept under the carpet,” he added. (Shah, 2019)

According to the National Resettlement Policy, 2002, ‘commencement of any work is prohibited until the affected people have received full compensation, protecting them from eviction’. The policy condemns inadequate compensation, delayed payments and dislocation. It sheds light on the consequences that are evident from past infrastructure development projects in the country.

Shah said, “The act recommends that a grievance redress committee be set up to address the concerns of those affected.” Any such committee is seen missing in the case of the KCR affected areas. Let alone a committee; even experts are not taken into confidence while taking such a huge step in the development of the city.

The policy calls for the establishment of a monitoring group to ensure that the authorities are complying with the resettlement plan for the affected persons without any unjust acts.

Showing resentment over this irresponsible behavior by the authorities, Shah said, “When an inclusive rehabilitation plan is missing as part of a development project like the KCR, only the poor will continue to bear the hardships and not benefit from it.”

The resettlement policy consequential for Pakistan’s progress was drafted 16 years ago but the authorities have still not found a way of implementing it in a rightful manner.

Shah says the lower-income class holds no importance for the government. “Any new infrastructure development project the state undertakes clearly outs this class.”

If the demolitions continue without a properly crafted rehabilitation plan, it will result in a counterproductive disaster for the city,” commented Dr. Ahmed, on not taking on-board experts to devise an alternative plan for the affected persons.

“In the context of the KCR, the focus is on land,” says Dr. Anwar. The Pakistan Railway wants the people who have been living there for decades now to finally return their land.

Not only the hawkers but even an everyday buyer was shocked to see the gutted Empress Market on November 11. Commuters paused to gawk and take photos of the newly bared building, whose walls could not be seen from the street for more than 50 years.

Empress Market has now become barren land that has put residents and those who used to come here to do their groceries in a solemn mood.

## Chapter 5

### Planning Nostalgia or Planning Dilemma?

Planning decisions in a city like Karachi often appear as discussionary and in the here, and now. Take the order of the Supreme Court of Pakistan as a primary example.

Dr. Nausheen H. Anwar says, “Not much thought was given into understanding that these encroachers really are.” There is hierarchy to this drive. “We need to the social and economic fabrics on which these markets have been functioning for decades,” she added.

The anti-encroachment drive in Karachi has attracted a polarizing conversation between members of the civil society and those of the government. The Mayor of Karachi, Wasim Akhtar and members of the larger bureaucracy – both at the provincial and district level – believe the anti-encroachment drive is necessary and timely.

Mayor Akhtar said, “People are looking at only one side of the picture.” He then went on to explain that within the Empress Market area and inside it, there were many individuals, who over the years had taken over the space and built their businesses, making money by subletting the space to others without permission.

“There were criminal activities taking place in that area and there were arms that were discovered,” he said. (Akhtar, 2019)

Dr. Anwar believes there is nostalgia in renovation plans for the city, trying to make it the way it was 40 years ago but, planning decisions are arbitrary in the city which do not board well for its future.



*PHOTO: Muhammad Hafeez, 50, used to sell biryani outside the Empress Market. He has now shifted to the Akra Plaza due to the demolitions.*

Another key player that has emerged in the case of the ongoing anti encroachment drive is the Supreme Court of Pakistan that has evolved as a powerful source in changing the urban landscape.

In the South Asian region, Colombo, for instance, is going through a massive drive to clear low income and informal settlements, similar to what is happening in Karachi, in the name of the anti-encroachment drive. People from the low income settlements are being rehoused in apartments and these drives are also part of a broader narrative to make Colombo in a world class city.

This is an interesting example to explore because Colombo is under the influence of Beijing at the moment in terms of development. Pakistan, on the other hand, is also under China's influence.

Dr. Ahmed, Head of the Urban Planning Department at the NED said, "If the drive continues without a properly worked out rehabilitation plan and a planning for undertaking demolitions, properties that are considered to be illegal, it will be dangerous and probably counterproductive for the city." (Ahmed, 2019)

"This drive is coming out as a disaster for the city because a particular class has already articulated the destruction of the Empress Market area," says Dr. Anwar highlighting informal economies and how they have made the city more sustainable.

Dr. Anwar raised other important questions like where is the debris going and how it is being used? "In the Martin Quarters area, for instance, stalls have been demolished and the debris is piling up," she said adding that there are people's houses on the other side of the area. "All the dust must be going in the resident's lungs," she pointed out.

On the issue of the rubble lying in the area for days now, Dr. Ahmed said, "One thing that becomes relevant from the debris that is lying in the Empress Market area is all the dust and dirt that it is giving air to." The place is both commercial and residential. "There could be a merrier reason like clogged up drainage systems and air pollution that no one is talking about," he added.

Mayor Akhtar says the KMC does not have enough funds to deposit the debris on its own. "Both the man power and machinery is not enough to get rid of so much mess around the city," he said.

Initially, the debris was being shifted to the Jamchakro area but because of lack of resources the rubble was only piling up without being properly disposed of. The process is also capital intensive as highlighted by the Mayor of Karachi.

"The KMC and the provincial government both do not have the kind of money to shift all the debris outside the city," Mayor Akhtar added.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Yesterday's Legal Hawker becomes Today's Illegal Encroacher**

“What has been happening in the city is a tale of incompetent city management. It needs a careful review on many counts,” says Ahmed.

The encroachment story will keep becoming complex until there is agreement on who the encroacher actually is.

Dr. Anwar says, “The anti-encroachment drive has had an incredibly deleterious impact on many so called encroachers who were small scale hawkers and part of a thriving informal economy in the country.” (Anwar, 2019)

These hawkers and small scale stalls is part of Karachi's informal economy. These economic activities have been part of a complex supply chain that has existed for many years in the city now. People have now taken loans to enable these markets to function and since the drive demolished their small stalls, they are unable to pay back their loans because of not being able to earn anything. These hawkers have linkages to different parts of the world because of the kind of business they had in the Empress Market.

Many are displaced from what used to be their permanent locations without being relocated as an evident short term consequence of the anti-encroachment drive. “If there is no planned action that overcomes this short term intervention of the court then people are expected to re-encroach and that too with more resilience complicating the situation even more,” said Dr. Ahmed. In the long run the encroachers are expected to re-group as the intervention fizzles out with time, undertaking the exercise in a different way altogether. (Ahmed, 2019)



PHOTO: *Salman, 24, works at a shop in the Saddar area. The shop illegally covers the footpath with sewing machines that are kept to attract customers.*

There is confusion and controversy regarding the identity of the encroacher. The other side of the story portrays another kind of an encroacher who has been taking advantage of the government and has used the facilities of the Empress Market as narrated by the Mayor of Karachi. But, there is also no denying the encroacher whose livelihood system has been hijacked in the name of the anti-encroachment drive.

According to Dr. Anwer encroachments is a historical process and the encroacher can have multiple identities. “He is the poor and he is also the rich. If you targeted everyone, the most affected was the poor then. So, there has not been any delineation or any careful survey done,” says Dr. Anwer.

The Supreme Court decision itself raises a very important question about why is the Supreme Court intervening in these matters today? Why is the Supreme Court taking on a role that targets encroachers and encroachment in such a significant way?

According to Dr. Ahmed, the Supreme Court had a well-meaning intent. “At the end of the day, it is only a court and not a law executing agency. Orders are passed in the court but the implementation vests in the government,” he said.

Had the court known that there is a hierarchy of encroachers involved in different kinds of activities that take place in the Empress Market, the decision would have unfolded in a different way.

Yesterday’s illegal hawker can be part of a vote bank. If the political landscape shifts tomorrow, he is no longer a part of it. Why it is that yesterday’s legal vendor becomes tomorrow’s illegal encroacher? Why does this language keep shifting?

Dr. Anwer says that the state has the power to shift that language; the state has the power to negotiate that language. (Anwar, 2019)

The state becomes visible not only in terms of its judicial arm which is the Supreme Court but also the provincial and local government.

The mayor claims he struggled with the lack of political will and resources to deal with the issue. “I credit the top court’s ruling for enabling me to proceed with the drive against illegal occupiers in the city,” said Mayor Akhtar. (Akhtar, 2019)

All of this raises question about accountability, transparency and the nature of governance in Karachi which in any case is complicated and politically worse.

## **Chapter 7**

### **The effects of the anti-encroachment drive on the environment**

The anti-encroachment drive in the metropolis began during the winter season. An increase in the air quality due to dust particles caused by debris of the demolished stalls was calculated before and after the drive began.

According to numbeo.com air pollution was marked extremely high causing a surge in breathing problems in the vendors and nearby residents of the Empress Market area.

Ear Nose Throat (ENT) specialist and surgeon, Dr. Iftikhar Salahuddin said, “The polluted air is causing smoke-related problems in people.”

Such air when inhaled triggers pneumonia, bronchitis, etc. “Patients are also coming in with redness of the eyes and complaining of other allergies,” he added.

He suggested that older age people and children wear a mask to avoid direct contact with polluted air and to prevent themselves from dust-induced health problems. (Salahuddin, 2019)

Dr. Anwar says the anti-encroachment drive is also about convenience. “They are driving out one class, making it convenient for another certain class,” she said.

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13. Arif Hassan, Architect
14. Iftikhar Shalwani, Commissioner Karachi
15. Muhammad Toheed, Urban Planner
16. Iftikhar Salahuddin, ENT Surgeon

## **Profiles:**

1. Ibrahim Memon, vendor at Empress Market
2. Taj Beneri, resident of Gharibabad
3. Sahira Bano, resident of Gharibabad
4. Taseer Khan, regular customer at Empress Market
5. Rani, street hawker at Empress Market

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