

Pakistan: For a Fair Compensation to Kartarpur Border Area Farmers

Saturday 23 March 2019, by [HRCP](#), [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 20 March 2019).

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has demanded a fair compensation to Kartarpur Border area farmers. A five members fact finding mission issued its recommendations printed by *Daily Dawn* Lahore today,

The Mission recommended that no involuntary resettlement occurred without a systematic census and inventory to the satisfaction of the affectees.

It demanded a transparent and efficient mechanism to address any violation of people's economic, social and cultural rights. The Mission demanded a fair compensation and alternative land to farmers.

The Commission also called for an amending the Land Acquisition Act 1894 to institute a right-based approach to all land acquisition in Pakistan.

Earlier a Dawn investigative report also came to similar conclusions.

Hope the government act upon the recommendations and the local farmers grievances are addressed.

We welcome the opening of the border and normalisation of relationship between Pakistan and India but not at the cost of the farmers.

Farooq Tariq

General secretary

Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee

HRCP Report

March 20, 2019

Press release

Kartarpur residents must be fairly compensated

Lahore, 20 March 2019. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has expressed its strong concern over the land acquisition being carried out to develop the Kartarpur Corridor. Following a fact-finding mission in the area, HRCP has said, that 'while the development of the Kartarpur Corridor will help improve Pakistan's relations with India, this should not happen at the cost of

people's homes and livelihoods. Our fact-finding mission reveals that at least six villages will be affected by the land acquisition – two of which will be demolished entirely.

'The Ministry of Religious Affairs is said to have acquired 1,500 acres around the Kartarpur gurdawara. The deputy commissioner in Narowal estimates that another 1,500 acres may be required in the future. This land has been acquired under the colonial Land Acquisition Act 1894, which is skewed in favour of the state rather than those affected by land acquisition. Many small landowners say they have no knowledge of how the acquisition plan will be sequenced and whether they are even to receive any compensation – not only for their land, but also for the crops destroyed in the process. The residents of the village of Dodhy, which is home to 1,500 to 2,000 families, also fear it will be demolished, but they are unaware of any plan in place for their resettlement and rehabilitation.

'Any allegedly forcible evictions are unacceptable and the right to fair compensation must drive all land acquisition. Equally, the right to information is vital. Many of these families have lived here for generations and it is not clear how long they will have to wait to be compensated. Migrating elsewhere and rebuilding their homes and livelihoods – when most of them have farmed all their lives and do not have the skills needed to change occupations – is an enormous task, which the Land Acquisition Act 1894 does not address. Moreover, while the deputy commissioner in Narowal has said that the government will ensure that residents are compensated for their land at a higher rate than scheduled, he too has acknowledged that delays in compensation are likely.

'HRCP urges the government to ensure that no involuntary resettlement occurs until a systematic census and inventory has been carried out to the satisfaction of the residents affected by the project. Given the lack of information that many have complained about, there should be a transparent and efficient grievance redressal mechanism to address any violation of people's economic, social or cultural rights. Their demand for fair compensation – keeping in mind the likely increase in price of agricultural land in Kartarpur – and for alternative land to farm must be given due consideration. In the longer term, the government must seriously consider amending the Land Acquisition Act 1894 to institute a rights-based approach to all land acquisition in Pakistan.'

Dr Mehdi Hasan

Chairperson
