

Madam chairwoman, Ladies & Gentlemen,
I take the floor on behalf of the World Sindhi Congress. The
representations of the World Sindhi Congress have left New York,
delegating me to read this statement on their behalf.
This is the statement

and their partner organization,
the Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Org.

~~Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples~~

Madam Chairwoman, Honorable Special Rapporteur, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thankyou for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Sindh, Pakistan, and as a representative of the World Sindhi Congress. The issues affecting the indigenous population of Sindh have reached unprecedented levels, resulting in violence, discrimination, and human rights abuses. I take the floor today to draw your attention to the use of enforced disappearances against Sindhi human rights defenders, activists and journalists who are raising ^{their} voice against the appropriation of Sindh's natural resources and mega development projects, increasing the marginalization of indigenous groups.

Pakistan's development projects are ambitious and wide-ranging. Most notably, the government has undertaken a partnership with China in one of the region's largest development projects, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Additionally, the government has launched a large-scale coal mining project in the Tharparkar Desert. Along with a myriad of other projects, there are two main underlying issues with Pakistan's ambitions: they will result in large-scale environmental damage, and the project's designs will only further marginalize the indigenous populations that are most significantly affected by the plans. Also, the government of Pakistan has not consulted with these peoples regarding their concerns or how the projects will impact them, their livelihoods and their homelands.

Agriculture projects play a significant role in the CPEC plan. However, many of the residents within the project zone hold customary land rights and do not have an official deed to their property or grazing land. Because they lack the official papers, the land is seen as government-owned and thus leasable to China. The United Nations' "free, prior and informed consent" norm was created to help protect people in a situation such as this. However, the government has not complied with the norm, leaving the indigenous communities either displaced or in jeopardy of losing their livelihoods, allowing for largescale maladaptation of traditional lands with no recourse. In addition to their livelihoods being threatened via loss of traditional lands, Sindhi people are not being given the opportunity to work on the initiatives, further inhibiting the communities' economic opportunities.

Pakistani security agencies continue to abduction and subsequently torture Sindhi political and human rights activists. The targeted political groups, such as JSQM and JSMM, are indigenous activists groups that are fighting against the government's policies to further marginalize their Nation via its use of exploitative development projects, resource rights usurpation, and a lack of control over their homeland. The practice of enforced disappearances has been an ongoing phenomenon in Sindh for the last several years, and had a significant increase during 2017, when over 160 people went missing. Cases have not been officially registered against specific parties for fear of reprisal and many of the activists' whereabouts are still unknown.

We hope that through this forum, we can work together to affect positive change in Sindh and to protect the rights of the indigenous Sindhi community and end the use of enforced disappearances by State security forces.

SINDHIS