



## Land or Death: Pakistan's Peasants Against Military Capitalism

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2025/06/25

**Peasant movements are rising across Punjab against the empire of dispossession.**

In the heart of Punjab's agrarian landscape, from Okara to Khanewal to Bhakkar, a storm is brewing and it's not just about land. It is about power, justice, and survival. Over the past several months, Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (PKRC) and Anjuman Muzareen Punjab (AMP) have organized a series of resistance peasant mobilizations at key agrarian flashpoints. From Rakh Ghulam in Bhakkar to the occupied lands of Okara and Khanewal, landless peasants—women, youth, and entire families—are standing in defiant unity against what they rightly call a corporate and military empire of dispossession.



These are not symbolic protests. They are declarations of a new peasant consciousness—organized, rooted in decades of struggle, and ready to confront the growing tide of capitalist enclosures. Their message is loud and clear: This land is ours, not for sale.

### **Capitalism in Khaki: The Agrarian Front of Empire**

We are now witnessing a dangerous and more aggressive phase of agrarian conquest in Pakistan. Through the Green Pakistan Initiative and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the state—backed by military conglomerates and corporate interests—is orchestrating a massive land grab, primarily in Punjab. Nearly 4.8 million acres of land have been earmarked for corporate farming, and 0.9 million acres have already been allotted to private companies and military-run enterprises like Fongrow [1].

These deals are cloaked in the language of “climate resilience,” “food security,” and “modernization,” but their reality is stark: the consolidation of elite control over land and resources, and the erasure of peasant life. As of October 19, 2023, 0.7 million acres of land in Cholistan had been leased to M/S Green Corporate Initiative Pvt. Ltd., a military-linked agribusiness entity, under a 20-year contract with an optional 10-year extension [2]. The lack of public disclosure surrounding the terms of this deal has sparked serious concerns about transparency, accountability, and the unchecked expansion of military control over civilian resources.

In November 2024, over 700 peasant families were subjected to violent eviction attempts in Muhammad Nagar Seed Farm, Pakpattan District (Punjab), after the land was transferred to a private firm, Green Corporate Initiative Pvt. Ltd [3]. Despite a stay order from the Lahore High Court, crops were destroyed and land was forcibly leveled by authorities, violating both legal protections and Article 17.3 of UNDROP (protection from arbitrary displacement).

Similarly, in the Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project, thousands of farming families were displaced and faced forced eviction, despite a Lahore High Court ruling declaring the project unconstitutional [4]. These evictions continue, facilitated by intimidation and legal harassment. An estimated 85% of the land acquired is agricultural [5], displacing nearly 1 million peasants, sharecroppers, and farmworkers—without adequate compensation or free, prior, and informed consent, in violation of Articles 10 and 17.1 of UNDROP.



This is not merely the militarization of the countryside—it is capitalism in khaki. The military is not only a repressive force; it is now a landlord, investor, and agribusiness tycoon, with the power to shape both policy and land markets.

### **Suppression of Protests and Threats to Life**

Peasant leaders and land defenders continue to face threats, arrests, and violence. On **April 17, 2025—the International Day of Peasant Struggles**—state agencies disrupted PKRC’s peaceful commemorative gathering in Depalpur-Okara. Authorities sealed the venue, harassed organizers, and suppressed press coverage. These acts represent clear violations of Article 9 of the UNDROP (freedom of expression and peaceful assembly).

One of the most alarming recent cases occurred on **April 10, 2025, at the Ehsan Pur Seed Farm in Kot Addu, Punjab**. As peasants were harvesting wheat, local authorities arrested two farmers and confiscated their tractor trolleys [6]. The land in question has been cultivated by peasant families for generations. The incident triggered a mass protest by local farmers and their families, who blocked roads demanding justice. Their pressure led to the release of the arrested farmers and return of their equipment. Farmers’ movements strongly condemned this violation—particularly the blatant disregard of a court-issued stay order protecting the peasants—and demanded a full investigation and suspension of the officers involved. The incident reflects the wider trend of displacing long-settled farmers under the guise of “corporate farming.”

### **Land Concentration, rural inequalities, Dispossession & Structural Violence**

The state’s model of agricultural development has violently excluded the majority of rural Pakistan. Today, 51% of rural households are landless [7], and land ownership remains deeply skewed. Just 5% of landlords control 64% of the country’s farmland, while 65% of farmers own only 15% of the land.

Corporate farming is the latest phase of the (post) colonial developmental regime [8]. On the one hand it will condemn small farmers who cannot compete with big agribusiness firms. It will thus add to the ranks of landless people in rural Pakistan, a number that is already beyond 30 million. Handing over millions of acres of land to opaque ‘private-public partnerships’ is all in the so-called national interest by land grabbing from peasants and small farmers.

This structural inequality deepens every year. Legal recognition is denied to peasants who have cultivated state, forest, or military-owned lands for generations. Thousands face evictions without due process or compensation. Women are doubly



marginalized—only 3% of land is owned by women [9], limiting their access to resources and rights.

This is not development. It is dispossession. It is violence enforced with bulldozers, eviction notices, and police batons.

### **Rural Collapse and the Myth of Modernization**

The cost of this so-called modernization is already evident. In Lahore, more than 35% of agricultural land has been lost to urbanization since 2000 [10]. In Multan alone, 94.5 square kilometers of cropland have disappeared in under two decades. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, over 300,000 hectares of agricultural land were rendered unfit for cultivation between 2014 and 2023 due to climate change, urban encroachment, and unregulated land use [11].

Deforestation has stripped the country of 20% of its forests over the last 24 years [12], further intensifying rural poverty and ecological collapse.

### **Resistance as Justice**

Despite the repression, resistance continues to grow. From Okara's historic AMP-led struggle to Bhakkar's new frontlines, the landless are not asking for charity—they are asserting their historical, moral, and political rights. Tenant communities are reclaiming their spaces, refusing forced eviction, and forging grassroots alliances against land monopoly and corporate plunder.

This resistance is part of a deeper, older struggle—echoing the land reform movements of the 1970s, the fisherfolk and forest dwellers of Sindh, and the current unified front of farmers' movements and alliances, including the Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (PKRC), Anjuman Muzareen Punjab (AMP), and progressive parties and trade union allies like Haqooq Khalq Party, Mazdoor Kissan Party, and the All Pakistan Trade Union Federation.

### **Toward a Radical Agrarian Future**

If democracy in Pakistan is to have any meaning, we must begin with the question of land. Without land justice, there is no economic justice. Without redistributive reform, there is no food sovereignty. Without breaking the military-corporate control of agriculture, there can be no real democracy.



### **We demand:**

- An immediate halt to all military and corporate land acquisitions under the Green Pakistan Initiative and SIFC.
- Legal recognition of land tenure rights for landless and tenant farmers cultivating state, forest, or military-controlled lands.
- Redistributive land reform to serve peasants, not generals or technocrats.
- Peasant control over seeds, water, and biodiversity to dismantle agribusiness monopolies.
- A peasant-led transition to agroecology and climate justice.
- Full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP), to which Pakistan is a signatory.

### **This Is Not Just Resistance. This Is a Revolution in the Making**

The peasant question is not about productivity—it is about power. It is about whether the future of Pakistan will be shaped by boardrooms and barracks, or by the hands that sow, till, and feed.

We reject a development paradigm that commodifies land, dehumanizes labor, and disposes of rural communities. The peasant is not a relic of the past. The peasant is the future—if that future is to be just, sustainable, and free.

We are peasants—we are cultivators.

We are not criminals—we are defenders of the commons.

**We are the backbone of this nation, and we refuse to be broken.**

**Our seeds, our soil, our sweat—we will defend them.**

**This is a struggle for freedom, not just farming.**

### **Land, Dignity, Sovereignty!**

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