TO:
Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, President

CC:
Mr. Yousuf Raza Gillani, Prime Minister
Mr. Rehman Malik, Minister for Interior
Mr. Khalid Masood Chaudry, Secretary, Irrigation Department, Punjab
Mr. Shahbaz Sharif, Chief Minister, Punjab
Dr. Faqir Hussain, Registrar, Supreme Court of Pakistan
Federal Minister for Human Rights

Board

Mr. Hossam Bahgat
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Egypt

Ms. Julie Cavanaugh-Bill
Western Shoshone Defense Project—WSDP, Newe Sogobia/United States

Ms. Shanthi Dairiam
International Women’s Rights Action Watch - Asia-Pacific, Malaysia

Mr. Renji George Joseph
Alliance for Holistic and Sustainable Development of Communities, India

Mr. Legborsi Saro Pyagbara
Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People—MOSOP, Nigeria

Mr. Wilder Sánchez Chávez
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International Network for Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
Red Internacional para los Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales
Réseau international pour les droits économiques, sociaux et culturels
شراكة العالم للحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية

27 April, 2012

RE: URGENT APPEAL – Respect human rights and stop forcible evictions around Shahpur Dam

The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) is the largest global network of organizations and activists devoted to achieving economic, social and environmental justice through human rights. Our membership is comprised of approximately 230 organizations and individuals from 66 countries.

We write to express our grave concern regarding the imminent forcible eviction of 65 families living on the sidelines of Shahpur dam, Attock district, Province of Punjab. The forcible displacement of these fisher folk families poses grave threats to their ability to realize their human right to water, health, adequate housing and an adequate standard of living, among a range of human rights.

According to reports received, plans are in-place to forcibly remove these families in order to facilitate the acquisition of the Shahpur Dam by private companies who intend to acquire a fishing contract. Our sources report that approximately 450 people stand to be evicted from land and fresh waterways on which they rely for their means of subsistence. Apparently, many of these families have already been displaced once prior, due to the degradation of the waters in Sindh and the River Indus, which compelled them to move to the waters of Punjab, and a large number of the families slated for eviction have lived in the area for more than two decades.

For the people who stand to be displaced by the private acquisition of this dam, access to water is essential for them to realize their right to health. Their right to adequate housing and to an adequate standard of living is also seriously threatened by this eviction order.

www.escr-net.org
We respectfully remind the Government of Pakistan of its obligations with regards to the right to food, the right to water, the right to health, the right to adequate housing and the right to an adequate standard of living, as established in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We also recall the United Nations’ Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-Based Evictions and Displacement which enshrines the right of all people to prior information, consultation, recourse and adequate notice when they are facing the prospect of being evicted and/or resettled in situations such as the one described in this present communication.

Given the urgency of the situation facing the families living near the Shahpur Dam, we respectfully appeal to the Government of Pakistan to undertake all efforts to avoid the forcible displacement of the above-mentioned families. We call the Government to protect and fulfill the human rights of the area’s fisherfolk and allow them continue to live and fish and enjoy their means of subsistence without interference.

Finally, we would be grateful for you to keep us informed of any measures taken.

Sincerely,

Suad Elias Atala
Acting Director