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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Africa Culture Internationale, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[9 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



What Is Karoonjhar?

Africa Culture International would to draw the attention of HRC the situation in Karoonjhar is the most beautiful mountain range of the world. It is located in the Nagerparker an attractive area of Tharparker District in the southeast of Sindh province which is currently occupied land by Pakistani army. This mountain range is around 20 kilometer long, spread over area of around 25 square kilometers. It has more than 100 peaks with maximum height of around 1000 ft. This is called Tarwat peak. Interestingly each peak has its own name. This range is always covered with grass because it has two large water springs called Akleshwer and Sardharo. These springs flow around the year. There are also rainwater springs like Bhetiani and Gordharo. In addition to these there are 20 other smaller springs which flow over this range. There is also a Karoonjhar dam which supplies water to Nagarparker, which is a city at the foot of surrounding Karoonjhar mountain range. In August and September this area becomes so beautiful that it attracts tourists from all over Pakistan. Karoonjhar is called beauty of Sindh. It has made its place in Sindhi poetry, folklore, songs, literature, music and traditions. Karoonjhar represents history and culture of Sindh and has remained the center of Hindu and Jain Dharam worship as it contains centuries old temples. It is said that temple belonging to God of Jain Dharam Mahaveer has also been located here. Therefore, Karoonjhar is the area of great archeological importance, which needs to be preserved and explored. Not only this but Karoonjhar has also a rain forest, which is a conservatory of large number of very rare and endangered plant and animal species. Karoonjhar is also associated with the resistance movement of Sindhi people against Britishers, which was led by a great guerilla fighter Rooplo Kolhi. Even today, there are songs written in his praise very popular among the local population.

Keeping in mind romantic relationship of Sindh's culture and traditions with Karoonjhar, Sindhi people have always been very sensitive about this region. They have been demanding since last several decades that this area should be declared world heritage site and accordingly Karoonjhar Nature Conservation Park should be established.

However, instead of responding to people's demand, the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) – a subsidiary entity of Pakistani Army started mineral exploitation of the area. This action angered the public and members of the civil society presented their case in the court of law. The court issued orders to stop mineral exploitation of the area.

However, FWO did not stop the work even after the court orders. Now the FWO wants to further extend their work to cover more area of karoonjhar. The Sindh Government under the army pressure has decided to lease more area for mineral exploitation.

This action tantamount to destruction of Sindh's cultural heritage. It will be not only loss to Sindh but loss to the whole world. This is because this would mean loss of several important animal and plant species. I am emphasizing importance of especially plant species which are being used by local people for medicinal purpose throughout the centuries. These plant species can be source of new antibiotics, which the world need today. In addition to loss of species, this would also be loss of important archeological sites which are waiting there to be explored by scientists. This would also mean end of Sindh's culture, history, music, poetry, literature and folklore. This would also mean loss of tourism.

People of Sindh strongly demand that:

Plans for mineral exploitation of Karoonjhar area should be halted immediately.

Karoonjhar should declared world heritage site.

Karoonjhar Nature Conservation Park should be established.

Archeological sites of the area should be preserved.

Karoonjhar Museum and Library should be established.

Tourism of the area should be promoted.

Relevant international organisations should intervene in the situation.

Karoonjhar presents romanticism of Sindh's history and culture. It is responsibility of the Government of the day to resist army's pressure and respond to public sentiment positively. People of Sindh warn the Pakistani army of Bangladesh like situation if mining at Karoonjhar not stopped immediately.
