

Karachi: Fishermen hold protest against DHA

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By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI, April 22: Fishermen, women and children from the various coastal villages of Karachi gathered in large numbers outside the Karachi Press Club on Tuesday and held a demonstration against the ban imposed by the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) on the use of a makeshift jetty on Gizri Creek. The protest was organised by the Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF).

Addressing the gathering, PFF chairperson Mohammad Ali Shah condemned what he described as the “atrocities of the DHA administration” while urging the newly elected government to take notice of the situation, which he claimed had put the future of a large number of fishermen in jeopardy.

“The government must pay immediate attention to the plight of fishermen facing grave problems on multiple fronts. The recent brutal action of the DHA administration has made life more difficult as dozens of families now face starvation,” he said, adding that it was the fourth time the DHA had evicted fishermen from a jetty since the 1980s.

Instead of depriving people of their livelihood and displacing them, he demanded that the DHA should help poor fishermen build a proper jetty.

“Everybody knows how the DHA acquired the invaluable property, which was later sold to bureaucrats and the elite for millions of rupees. Backed by the army, the DHA is accountable to no one. It has been throwing out fishermen from one jetty to another for decades, but there is no one who can question its authority,” he said.

He also warned the DHA authorities of a mass protest drive across Sindh if they didn’t withdraw the ban. Hussain Dhoraji, another fishermen’s representative, claimed he had documents issued by the then Bombay government that gave them fishing rights.

“The DHA has taken over 9,000 acres in Gizri, but can’t the administration spare just one acre for fishermen who have been living along the coast for generations? It’s an act of open injustice and must be condemned by all organisations espousing the cause of human rights,” he said.

Criticising the DHA administration for violating an agreement under which it had granted fishing rights in Gizri Creek, PFF general-secretary Saeed Baloch said it was high time that civil society, members of the press and representatives of the government intervened and saved the livelihood of fishermen.

P.S.

* From Dawn: <http://dawn.com/2008/04/23/local18.htm>