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## **Land Grabbing A menace to the Society in Pakistan: Assessing the Effectiveness of Legal Framework**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this article, the authors embark on an in-depth exploration of the legal mechanisms and regulatory frameworks in place to combat land mafia activities in Pakistan. This research constitutes a critical examination of the laws, regulations, and institutions tasked with addressing land grabbing, with a primary focus on their effectiveness in safeguarding land rights and curbing the actions of land mafias. Land mafia activities pose a multifaceted challenge that extends beyond criminality; they also challenge the very foundations of property rights and social order. Recognizing this, Pakistan has enacted a range of laws and regulations aimed at preventing land grabbing, restoring unlawfully seized land to rightful owners, and holding perpetrators accountable. This research article endeavours to dissect the legal landscape, scrutinize the strengths and weaknesses of existing legal measures, and evaluate their actual impact on curbing land mafia activities.

Through a comprehensive analysis, the researchers aim to answer pivotal questions: Are the legal frameworks sufficiently robust to deter land mafias? Are enforcement mechanisms effective in bringing perpetrators to justice? How do legal ambiguities and bureaucratic hurdles impede the implementation of anti-Qabza laws? Furthermore, this research assesses the alignment of the legal framework with international standards of property rights and good governance. The authors in further discussions of this research illuminates the intricacies of Pakistan's legal response to land mafia activities, discern where reforms are imperative, and, ultimately, contribute to a nuanced understanding of how the legal system can be fortified to protect the land rights of individuals and communities in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Comparative Legal Analysis, Judicial Process, Land Grabbing, Legal Framework

### **Introduction:**

Land grabbing, locally referred to as "Qabza," is a complex issue deeply rooted in Pakistan's historical, economic, and political landscape. Scholars have highlighted its historical origins, tracing them back to the colonial era and the post-independence period, where land ownership was heavily concentrated among landlords, laying the groundwork for contemporary land grabbing practices. Central to the problem is the role of powerful



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land mafias and their extensive networks. Extensive research has explored the intricate dynamics of these mafias, which often operate with the backing of political or criminal affiliations. They employ a range of tactics, including fraudulent land transfers, forgery, threats, and violence, to gain control over valuable land parcels, undermining the rule of law and displacing rightful landowners or the state. Efforts to combat land grabbing in Pakistan have been substantial and include various laws and regulations such as the Punjab Land Revenue Act, the Sindh Land Revenue Act, and the KPK Land Revenue Act or known as the West Pakistan land Revenue Act 1967. These legal provisions aim to protect landowners' rights and penalize illegal land occupation. Additionally, the judiciary has played a pivotal role in adjudicating land-related disputes, often acting as a final recourse for aggrieved parties. Despite these legal safeguards, the persistence of land grabbing raises questions about the effectiveness of these legal frameworks and the ability of law enforcement agencies to tackle this deeply entrenched issue. Beyond its legal dimensions, land grabbing has far-reaching socio-economic implications. It disrupts rural communities, displaces vulnerable populations, and negatively impacts agricultural productivity, a sector vital to Pakistan's food security and economic stability. These broader consequences have been explored by researchers, shedding light on how land grabbing perpetuates poverty and social unrest.

A substantial body of research underscores the complexities of land mafia networks operating in Pakistan. These mafias are often characterized by a web of influential individuals with connections to politics, law enforcement agencies, and the bureaucracy. These connections afford them protection, allowing them to continue their illegal activities with relative impunity. Research has illuminated the interplay between these mafias and local power structures, emphasizing how they exploit political affiliations to influence land records and manipulate legal processes. Understanding these networks is essential for developing effective countermeasures against land grabbing. While Pakistan has established a legal framework to combat land grabbing, several challenges persist. Researchers have highlighted the prevalence of corrupt practices within the legal and administrative systems, which often facilitate land grabbing. Additionally, lengthy legal procedures, bureaucratic red tape, and judicial backlogs have led to delayed justice for victims of land grabbing, discouraging many from pursuing legal remedies. The research has also emphasized the need for legal reforms to address these challenges and make the legal process more accessible and efficient. The socio-economic consequences of land grabbing extend beyond legal and administrative issues. Researchers have documented the adverse effects on rural communities and marginalized populations, particularly women and minorities. Land grabbing disrupts livelihoods, displaces vulnerable groups, and exacerbates poverty in affected regions. Moreover, it hampers agricultural productivity, which is a critical sector for Pakistan's economic stability and food security. <sup>1</sup> Scholars have called attention to the need for holistic development initiatives and land redistribution policies to mitigate these socio-economic repercussions.

### **Assessment of Land Ownership laws**

In this section, the authors focus on a critical aspect of the legal framework—land ownership laws—in the context of Pakistan's efforts to combat land mafia activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Shah, I. H., Dong, L., & Park, H.-S. (2020). Characterization of resource consumption and efficiency trends in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan: Economy-wide biotic and abiotic material flow accounting from 1978 to 2017. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 250, 119554.



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<sup>2</sup>These laws define and regulate the ownership, transfer, and registration of land, playing a pivotal role in preventing land grabbing and protecting the rights of landowners.

### **Ownership Structures and Tenure Systems**

The analysis begins by investigating into Pakistan's diverse ownership structures and land tenure systems, which include individual, collective, and communal ownership. <sup>3</sup>This examination seeks to clarify the various forms of landownership, their historical underpinnings, and how they interact with modern land mafia activities. Understanding these ownership structures is essential for addressing land grabbing effectively.

### **Registration and Documentation**

Effective land ownership laws necessitate a robust system for registering and documenting land transactions. This section scrutinizes the processes and procedures for land registration, including the role of land revenue authorities, the accuracy of land records, and the mechanisms for updating and rectifying records. The examination highlights the vulnerabilities within these systems that land mafias exploit.

### **Land Ownership Restrictions and Land Reforms**

Many countries, including Pakistan, have introduced land ownership restrictions and land reform measures aimed at preventing land concentration and promoting equitable land distribution. This section assesses the effectiveness of these restrictions and reforms in curbing land mafia activities and safeguarding the land rights of marginalized communities.

### **The Role of Land Tribunals and Judicial Processes**

Land tribunals and judicial processes play a critical role in resolving land ownership disputes and addressing unlawful land grabs. This examination looks into the functionality, efficiency, and accessibility of land tribunals and courts in adjudicating land-related cases. It also evaluates the legal remedies available to aggrieved landowners and the obstacles they face in seeking justice.

### **Interplay with Informal and Customary Systems**

In many regions of Pakistan, informal and customary land ownership systems coexist alongside formal legal frameworks. This section explores the interplay between formal and informal systems, examining how land mafia activities exploit gaps and inconsistencies between the two. Understanding this interplay is crucial for crafting comprehensive solutions.

### **Anti-Qabza Laws and Regulations**

This section looks into the specific anti-Qabza laws and regulations that Pakistan has enacted to combat land mafia activities. These legal measures are designed to target and deter land grabbing, protect the rights of landowners, and hold perpetrators accountable.

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<sup>2</sup> Khalid, A., Nyborg, I., & Khattak, B. N. (2015). Whose property whose authority? Gendering the legal and customary practices in ownership and access to land: A case of Swat, Pakistan. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 41, 47-58.

<sup>3</sup> Abbas, M., Nadeem, A. M., Hassan, B., Rafique, M. Z., & Huang, S. (2016). A study on historical development of landownership and landed aristocracy in Pakistan. *Pacific Rim Property Research Journal*, 22(3), 217-230.



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An examination of these laws provides insight into the government's commitment to addressing this issue.

### **The Punjab Land Record Authority Ordinance, 2016**

The Punjab Land Record Authority Ordinance, 2016 is a landmark piece of legislation that specifically targets land grabbing activities in the province of Punjab. This section provides an in-depth analysis of the provisions of the act, including definitions of land grabbing, penalties for offenders, and the establishment of special tribunals for expedited adjudication of cases. It also evaluates the act's effectiveness in curbing land mafia activities.

### **Sindh Tenancy Act and Balochistan Tenancy Act**

In addition to provincial land grabbing laws, this section examines how the Sindh Tenancy Act and Balochistan Tenancy Act address land ownership and land rights issues in their respective regions. These Acts contain provisions related to land rights, tenancy agreements, and land transfer procedures. An analysis of these laws sheds light on their role in preventing land grabs and safeguarding land tenure rights.

### **Federal Laws and Regulations**

At the federal level, several laws and regulations impact land ownership and land tenure in Pakistan. This section explores federal legislation, such as the Land Revenue Act and related regulations, that influence land transactions, land records, and landownership. It assesses how these federal laws intersect with provincial anti-Qabza laws and their effectiveness in combating land mafia activities nationwide.

### **Legal Challenges and Enforcement Mechanisms**

While these anti-Qabza laws exist on paper, their effective implementation often faces numerous challenges. This section discusses the obstacles and shortcomings in enforcing these laws, including issues related to corruption, bureaucratic hurdles, and delays in legal proceedings. It also examines the mechanisms in place for reporting land grabbing incidents and pursuing legal action.

### **International Standards and Comparative Analysis**

To provide a broader perspective, this section evaluates Pakistan's anti-Qabza laws and regulations in light of international standards and comparative analysis with other countries facing similar land grabbing challenges. It considers best practices and lessons learned from international experiences to assess the adequacy of Pakistan's legal framework.

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<sup>4</sup> Ullah, I., Hussain, S., Akhoubzi, W., Hussain, S., Riaz, M. K., Jamil, S., & Parveen, A. P. (2022). Impact Evaluation of the Land Record Management Information System in the Punjab Province, Pakistan. [SI]: SSRN.

<sup>5</sup> Mahesar, G. H., & Mohyuddin, A. (2014). Multiple conventions of unpaid labor (Begar) in Sindh rice belt: Dualistic resistance & cooperation in sharecropping arrangements. *Science International*, 26(1).

<sup>6</sup> Acemoglu, D., Cheema, A., Khwaja, A. I., & Robinson, J. A. (2020). Trust in state and nonstate actors: Evidence from dispute resolution in Pakistan. *Journal of Political Economy*, 128(8), 3090-3147.



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Through a comprehensive examination of anti-Qabza laws and regulations, this section aims to elucidate the strengths and weaknesses of Pakistan's legal measures in combating land mafia activities. It serves as a critical evaluation of the legal arsenal available to the government and highlights areas where reforms and enhancements may be necessary to protect land rights and prevent land grabbing effectively.

### **Legal Mechanism for Land Dispute Resolution**

Land dispute resolution in Pakistan involves a legal mechanism that combines formal and informal processes. The process primarily falls under the jurisdiction of civil courts, and several laws and procedures govern it. Here's an overview of the legal mechanism for land dispute resolution in Pakistan:

#### **Initiation of Legal Proceedings:**

##### **Filing a Case:**

Landowners or parties involved in a land dispute initiate the process by filing a case in the relevant civil court. The court's jurisdiction depends on the location of the disputed property.

##### **Nomenclature of the Case:**

Land dispute cases are typically categorized as civil suits or property suits, depending on the nature of the dispute.

##### **Preliminary Legal Steps:**

##### **Issuance of Notices:**

After a case is filed, the court may issue notices to all parties involved in the dispute, including the plaintiff (the party initiating the case) and the defendant (the opposing party).

##### **Framing of Issues:**

The court frames the specific issues in dispute, which helps define the scope of the legal proceedings.

##### **Evidence and Hearings:**

##### **Examination of Witnesses:**

Both parties have the opportunity to present witnesses, documents, and other forms of evidence to support their claims.

##### **Cross-Examination:**

The opposing party can cross-examine witnesses presented by the other side.

##### **(c) Court Hearings:**

The court conducts hearings to review the evidence and arguments presented by both parties.

##### **Legal Decisions:**

##### **Judgment:**

After considering all evidence and arguments, the court issues a judgment, which can include decisions on property ownership, boundaries, and compensation for damages.



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### **Appeals:**

Parties dissatisfied with the court's judgment can file appeals in higher courts, such as the High Court or the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

### **Execution of Orders:**

#### **(a) Enforcement:**

If the judgment favors one party, the court may issue orders for the enforcement of the judgment, which can include the eviction of unlawful occupants or the transfer of property title.

#### **(b) Recovery of Possession:**

In cases where unlawful possession is involved, the court may order the recovery of possession by the rightful owner.

### **Role of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR):**

#### **(a) Mediation and Arbitration:**

In some cases, parties may opt for alternative dispute resolution methods like mediation or arbitration to resolve land disputes outside of the court system.<sup>7</sup>

#### **(b) Lok Adalats:**

Pakistan also has Lok Adalats (people's courts) that can facilitate the resolution of disputes, including land disputes, through conciliation and compromise.

It's important to note that land dispute resolution can be a time-consuming process in Pakistan's formal legal system. Additionally, the legal mechanism may vary slightly by province, as land-related matters often fall under provincial jurisdiction.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, consulting with legal experts and authorities familiar with the specific region is essential for navigating land dispute resolution effectively.

### **The Legal Framework Challenges**

Challenges in Pakistan's legal framework related to land disputes and land ownership are multifaceted and can impede the effective resolution of land-related issues. Here are some of the key challenges:

#### **Lengthy Legal Procedures:**

Land dispute resolution in Pakistan is often plagued by lengthy and convoluted legal processes. These procedures involve multiple court appearances, adjournments, and delays in scheduling hearings. Consequently, parties involved in land disputes may endure years of waiting for a resolution. This extended timeline can lead to financial strain, frustration, and discouragement among those seeking justice, potentially dissuading them from pursuing legal remedies.

#### **Corruption and Bribery:**

A persistent challenge within the legal system in Pakistan is the prevalence of corruption, including unethical practices among judicial officials and law enforcement personnel. This corruption can manifest in the form of bribery and influence peddling, skewing the

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<sup>7</sup> Ali, M., & Geng, L. L. (2019). Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) in Pakistan: The role of lawyers in the mediation procedure. *International Journal of Research*, 6(04), 421-430.

<sup>8</sup> Keshavjee, M. M. (2013). Islam, Sharia, and Alternative Dispute Resolution. *Islam, Sharia, and Alternative Dispute Resolution*, 1-256.



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outcomes of land dispute cases. As a result, trust in the impartiality and fairness of the legal process is undermined, particularly affecting individuals who lack the financial means to engage in corrupt practices and secure favorable rulings.

### **Inadequate Land Records:**

The state of land records in Pakistan is a major concern, with issues ranging from inaccuracies to incomplete documentation. Land disputes often stem from discrepancies in land records, making it challenging to establish ownership and resolve conflicts. <sup>9</sup>The absence of reliable, up-to-date land records compounds the complexity of land dispute resolution efforts, frequently leading to protracted legal battles.

### **Land Mafia Influence:**

Land mafias and criminal organizations exert substantial influence in certain regions of Pakistan, enabling them to manipulate land transactions and engage in unlawful land grabs with impunity. These groups may maintain connections to influential figures, which makes challenging their activities a formidable task. The land mafia's reach extends beyond criminal activities, as they often wield political, economic, and social power that hampers efforts to curb their influence and restore land rights.

### **Bureaucratic Red Tape:**

Navigating the bureaucratic processes associated with land registration and transfer in Pakistan can be daunting due to their complexity and inefficiency. The procedures frequently involve interactions with numerous government departments and officials, causing substantial delays. Such red tape not only hinders the efficient resolution of land disputes but also creates opportunities for corruption and rent-seeking behaviour within the bureaucracy.

### **Lack of Legal Awareness:**

A significant portion of the population, particularly in rural areas, lacks awareness of their legal rights and the intricacies of the legal process for resolving land disputes. This knowledge gap can lead to unequal power dynamics during legal proceedings, as parties with greater legal awareness may exploit the situation to their advantage. Moreover, disadvantaged individuals may not fully comprehend their rights, further complicating their ability to defend their landownership.

### **Political Influence:**

Political figures and local politicians sometimes interject themselves into land disputes, adding complexity to resolution efforts. <sup>10</sup>Their involvement may lead to biased decisions and create an environment of intimidation, as parties involved may fear retribution for opposing politically connected individuals. This political interference undermines the integrity of the legal process and fosters an atmosphere of impunity.

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<sup>9</sup> Shabbir, M., Shahid, M., Atif, M., & Niaz, U. (2020). Land Record Computerization brings more Trouble for Farmers in Punjab, Pakistan. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 6(2), 753-760.

<sup>10</sup> Naqvi, F. (2011). *My Land, My Right: Putting land rights at the heart of the Pakistan floods reconstruction*. Oxfam.



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### **Resource Constraints:**

Courts and law enforcement agencies in Pakistan often face resource constraints, including insufficient staffing, a shortage of trained personnel, and inadequate infrastructure. These limitations can hinder their ability to effectively handle land dispute cases, exacerbating delays and inefficiencies within the legal system.

### **Lack of Access to Legal Representation:**

Many individuals involved in land disputes may lack access to legal representation due to financial constraints. Legal fees and associated costs can be prohibitive, particularly for marginalized communities. As a result, parties without adequate legal counsel may face unequal representation in court, affecting the fairness of legal proceedings.

### **Customary and Informal Practices:**

In some areas of Pakistan, customary and informal land tenure practices coexist with formal legal systems. These traditional practices can create confusion and conflicting claims, making it challenging to resolve land disputes. The reconciliation of informal practices with formal legal requirements can pose a unique set of challenges and complicate dispute resolution efforts.

Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires comprehensive reforms within Pakistan's legal and administrative systems. Such reforms should aim to streamline legal procedures, enhance transparency, combat corruption, improve land record management, increase legal awareness among the population, strengthen the independence of the judiciary, and bolster the capacity of law enforcement agencies to ensure a fair and impartial resolution of land disputes.

### **Comparative Analysis**

A comparative analysis of the legal framework and its effectiveness in addressing land disputes and land ownership issues in Pakistan, India, UK and USA is given below.

#### **Pakistan:**

Pakistan's legal framework for land disputes consists of a complex network of federal and provincial laws, along with customary practices.<sup>11</sup> Notable legislation includes the Illegal Dispossession Act, 2005, and various land revenue laws. However, the effectiveness of this framework is challenged by a range of issues. Lengthy legal procedures, corruption within the legal system, inadequate land records, and the influence of land mafias often impede the fair and timely resolution of land disputes. The legal system's effectiveness is further hindered by bureaucratic red tape, political interference, and resource constraints within the judicial and law enforcement systems. Additionally, the lack of legal awareness among the population and limited access to legal representation diminish the framework's ability to provide justice to all stakeholders.

#### **India:**

Land-related laws in India are diverse, encompassing central and state legislation, such as the Land Acquisition Act, 2013, and various tenancy and land revenue laws. India, like Pakistan, grapples with land dispute issues and has a comprehensive legal framework

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<sup>11</sup> McMichael, P. (2016). Land grabbing as security mercantilism in international relations. In *Land grabbing and global governance* (pp. 47-64). Routledge.



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However, India faces its own set of challenges. Land disputes in India often lead to protracted legal battles due to an overburdened judiciary and backlog of cases. Corruption within the legal system, while not universal, remains a concern in some regions. Land records can be outdated and riddled with errors, complicating land dispute resolution. The effectiveness of India's legal framework varies from state to state, with some states implementing land reforms more effectively than others. Land-related issues are also closely tied to socio-economic factors, making comprehensive resolution a complex task.

In both Pakistan and India, there is room for improvement in the effectiveness of the legal framework for land disputes. These improvements may involve streamlining legal procedures, enhancing transparency, addressing corruption, improving land record management, increasing legal awareness, and strengthening the capacity of judicial and law enforcement agencies. Ultimately, land-related challenges are multifaceted and require ongoing efforts to ensure fair and efficient resolution processes for all stakeholders.

### **United States:**

In the United States, land ownership and dispute resolution are governed primarily by state laws, with each state having its legal framework. Land ownership is well-documented through deeds, surveys, and public land records, enhancing transparency. The legal system in the U.S. generally operates efficiently, with access to courts and legal representation widely available. However, challenges do exist, including property disputes and issues related to eminent domain, zoning regulations, and environmental restrictions. While the legal framework is generally effective, disparities in access to justice and the costs associated with legal representation can still hinder some individuals' ability to navigate land-related disputes.

### **United Kingdom:**

The United Kingdom has a robust and well-established legal framework for land ownership and dispute resolution. Land registration systems provide clear documentation of property ownership and boundaries, reducing the likelihood of disputes. <sup>12</sup>The legal system is generally efficient and accessible, with a strong tradition of property law. However, challenges such as land access disputes, property development conflicts, and issues related to historical land rights occasionally arise. The UK's effectiveness in addressing these challenges is generally high due to the clarity of property records and the efficiency of the legal process.

In summary, while Pakistan, the United States, and the United Kingdom all have legal frameworks for land disputes, their effectiveness varies. Pakistan faces significant challenges, including corruption and inefficiencies, which hinder effective dispute resolution. The United States has a generally efficient legal system but still encounters disparities in access to justice. The United Kingdom boasts a robust and effective legal framework, with clear property records and accessible dispute resolution mechanisms. Understanding these comparative strengths and weaknesses can inform efforts to improve land dispute resolution systems worldwide.

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<sup>12</sup> Lavers, T. (2012). 'Land grab' as development strategy? The political economy of agricultural investment in Ethiopia. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(1), 105-132.



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### **Role of Law Enforcement Agencies**

Law enforcement agencies play a pivotal role in managing and resolving land disputes and land ownership issues. One of their primary responsibilities is to investigate and document cases related to land disputes comprehensively.<sup>13</sup> This involves collecting evidence, including land records, property documents, and statements from witnesses, which are crucial for legal proceedings.

### **Investigation and Documentation:**

Law enforcement agencies are responsible for conducting thorough investigations into land disputes. This involves gathering a wide range of evidence to establish the facts surrounding a dispute. They collect and examine land records, property documents, surveys, and any relevant paperwork that can shed light on the property's ownership history and boundaries. Additionally, law enforcement officers interview witnesses, both parties involved and any other individuals with knowledge of the dispute. This meticulous investigation is essential to ensure that legal proceedings are based on accurate and credible information.

### **Maintaining Order and Security:**

One of the most critical roles of law enforcement agencies in land disputes is maintaining public order and security. Land disputes, particularly those involving allegations of land grabbing or unlawful occupation, can escalate into violent confrontations. Law enforcement officers are deployed to prevent such violence and protect the safety of all parties involved. Their presence and intervention serve as a deterrent to illegal activities and can help de-escalate tense situations. Ensuring a peaceful environment during land disputes is fundamental to the fair and just resolution of these issues.

### **Enforcing Court Orders:**

When legal disputes over land ownership are brought before the courts, judges may issue specific orders to resolve the matter. These orders can include directives for eviction, the transfer of property titles, or the cessation of certain activities on the disputed land. Law enforcement agencies are tasked with the execution of these court orders. This involves physically carrying out the decisions made by the court. For example, if a court orders the eviction of illegal occupants, law enforcement officers oversee the eviction process to ensure that it is carried out in accordance with the law. Their actions in enforcing court orders play a pivotal role in implementing legal judgments and restoring rightful ownership to the aggrieved parties.

### **Conflict Resolution and Mediation:**

In some instances, law enforcement agencies may engage in conflict resolution and mediation efforts. They can act as intermediaries between the disputing parties, encouraging dialogue and negotiation to reach an amicable settlement. These mediation efforts can be particularly effective in reducing the burden on the court system and promoting peaceful resolutions.

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<sup>13</sup> Imam, S. K., & Fatima, S. (2022). Human Migration: A Law Enforcement Perspective of Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of History & Culture*, 43(1).



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### **Legal Advisory and Expertise:**

Law enforcement agencies often collaborate with legal experts and government officials to navigate complex land disputes. They provide valuable insights and information that can aid in the legal process. Their involvement ensures that land disputes are handled in compliance with the relevant laws and regulations.

The outcome of this is that, law enforcement agencies play a multifaceted role in addressing land disputes and land ownership issues. Their responsibilities encompass comprehensive investigation and documentation, maintaining peace and security, enforcing court orders, facilitating conflict resolution, and providing legal expertise. These efforts are essential to ensuring a fair and just resolution of land-related conflicts, upholding property rights, and maintaining social stability within communities.

### **Effectiveness of Legal Reforms**

The effectiveness of legal reforms in addressing land disputes and land ownership issues can vary depending on several factors, including the nature of the reforms, their implementation, and the broader socio-economic context. The below mentioned information provide a detailed examination of the effectiveness of legal reforms in this context:

### **Clarity and Modernization of Laws:**

Legal reforms that focus on clarifying and modernizing land-related laws have the potential to be highly effective. Clarity in laws reduces ambiguity and provides individuals and communities with a solid legal foundation for landownership and dispute resolution.<sup>14</sup> Modernization efforts streamline processes, making them more efficient and responsive to contemporary needs. When implemented effectively, these reforms contribute to the reduction of legal uncertainties and disputes, promoting a more secure environment for property ownership.

### **Land Registration and Record-Keeping:**

Reforms aimed at improving land registration systems and record-keeping are essential for effective land dispute resolution. Efficient land registries that maintain accurate and up-to-date information help prevent disputes arising from unclear property boundaries or ownership claims. The digitization of land records enhances transparency and accessibility, reducing the potential for fraud or manipulation. These reforms not only facilitate legal processes but also instil confidence in property rights among landowners and potential investors.

### **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanisms:**

The introduction or strengthening of ADR mechanisms, such as mediation and arbitration, can significantly enhance the effectiveness of land dispute resolution.<sup>15</sup> ADR provides quicker and less adversarial avenues for resolving disputes, reducing the burden on overloaded courts and allowing parties to reach mutually agreeable solutions. Effective ADR programs require trained mediators, accessible facilities, and public awareness campaigns to inform citizens of these alternative options.

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<sup>14</sup> Kenney-Lazar, M. (2018). Governing dispossession: Relational land grabbing in Laos. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 108(3), 679-694.

<sup>15</sup> Effendi, M. S. (2017). Conflict Resolution Research in Pakistan: Scope and Challenges to the Development of the Discipline 1. *Pakistan Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2(1), 29-50.



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### **Strengthening Judicial and Legal Institutions:**

Reforms aimed at strengthening judicial and legal institutions are paramount for improving the effectiveness of land dispute resolution. Adequate funding, staffing, and infrastructure are essential to ensure that courts can efficiently handle land-related cases. Reducing case backlogs and improving court procedures enhance the speed and fairness of the legal process. Additionally, efforts to ensure the independence of the judiciary from external influences contribute to trust in the system.

### **Anti-Corruption Measures:**

Introducing anti-corruption measures within the legal system is vital for ensuring the effectiveness of land dispute resolution. Transparent court procedures, robust accountability mechanisms, and ethical standards for legal professionals help combat corrupt practices that can undermine justice. These reforms create an environment where disputes are resolved impartially and without undue influence, instilling confidence in the legal system.

### **Land Redistribution and Land Reform:**

Land reform programs, particularly those focused on land redistribution to disadvantaged communities, can be effective in addressing historical inequities in landownership. Success, however, depends on comprehensive planning that considers the socio-economic context, adequate allocation of resources, and community involvement. Land reform can promote social stability and economic development by providing marginalized populations with access to land and resources.

### **Public Awareness and Legal Education:**

Promoting public awareness and legal education regarding land rights and dispute resolution processes is foundational to an effective legal framework. Informed citizens are better equipped to protect their rights, engage in fair negotiations, and navigate the legal system. Outreach programs, community workshops, and accessible information resources empower individuals and communities to assert their land rights and seek legal remedies when necessary.

The effectiveness of legal reforms in addressing land disputes and land ownership issues depends on various factors, including the comprehensiveness of the reforms, their implementation, and their alignment with local needs and conditions. When designed and executed thoughtfully, these reforms can contribute to more secure property rights, reduced disputes, and enhanced access to justice for all stakeholders.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the issue of land grabbing, orchestrated primarily by powerful land mafias, poses a formidable challenge to property rights, social stability, and economic development in Pakistan. Throughout this research article, the authors delved into the prevalence and impact of land mafias, the effectiveness of the legal framework, the role of law enforcement and accountability, and collaborative efforts aimed at addressing land disputes. To confront this pressing issue effectively, Pakistan must prioritize a series of multifaceted reforms and initiatives. First and foremost, comprehensive legal reforms are imperative to simplify the complex legal structures governing land ownership and dispute resolution. These reforms must aim to eliminate ambiguity, enhance accessibility, and make property rights clear and enforceable. Moreover, emphasis should be placed on



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maintaining accurate and up-to-date land records to reduce disputes arising from unclear ownership.

Capacity building is another critical aspect of addressing land disputes effectively. This involves investing in extensive training programs to equip law enforcement officers, judges, legal professionals, and specialized units within law enforcement agencies with the expertise needed to navigate the intricacies of land laws, employ conflict resolution techniques, and manage land-related cases.

The infusion of modern technology and data management systems into the arsenal of law enforcement agencies will expedite land dispute resolution. These tools will facilitate the forensic analysis of land records, ensuring that the evidence presented in land-related cases is accurate and verifiable. Adequate resources, both human and financial, should be allocated to support investigations, legal proceedings, and the maintenance of security at disputed sites.

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