



WORLD FISHERIES DAY
WEEK OF ACTION AGAINST OCEAN GRABBING
(November 15-22, 2016)



PAKISTAN FISHERFOLK FORUM

World Fisheries day is celebrated every year on November 21 throughout the world by the fisherfolk communities. The day draws attention to overfishing, habitat destruction and other serious threats to the sustainability of marine and fresh water resources. It also helps in highlighting the critical importance to human lives, of water and the lives it sustains, both in and out of water.

The fishing community in Sindh has remained marginalized for a long time with issues like declining fish population, inadequate water flows in major canals and, above all, lack of sound official policy to develop the sector. This has resulted in low production and low consumption of fish in the province. The fishing communities comprising two million residents along the coastal strip from Karachi to Thatta and Badin districts in lower Sindh region are confronting issues that have remained unresolved for years. The decline in fish is attributed to factors like climatic changes, use of banned nets and catching undersize fish.

Keeping in view the prolong issues of fisher communities in Pakistan and especially of Sindh, Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) celebrated World Fisheries Day with theme of week of action against Ocean Grabbing. Since, fishing communities in Pakistan are increasingly threatened by many nefarious plans of ocean grabbing such as destruction of Mangroves and reclamation of land, newly planned cities, promotion of destructive models of fishing, encroachments of water bodies etc. During the week, PFF carried out number of activities, started from November 15, 2016 and ended with the big celebration of World Fisheries Day on November 22, 2016. All activities were conducted in different districts of Sindh including Karachi, Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Sanghar, Badin, Thatta, Sujawal, Umerkot and Badin. The details of activities are as under;

1. Launching Ceremonies on the Week of Action on Land Grabbing:

PFF initiated the week of action with organizing launching ceremonies in different districts. The events were attended by concerned government officials, civil society activists, NGO's, media representatives, teachers, advocates and fisher community. During the programs, the



different stakeholders were apprised about the ocean grabbing and were sensitized on its adverse impacts. It also condemned the encroachment on ocean and other fresh water bodies.

2. Rally against Occupation of Fresh Water Bodies:

During the week of action, big rallies were organized against occupation of inland water bodies and for resolving the issues confronting the fishermen. Addressing on occasions, the speakers said that feudal lords and chieftains are harassing the fishermen community and the Sindh government is supporting contractors and influential persons who have deployed armed men along fresh waters to deprive them of their catch at gunpoint. The participants demanded the government to take notice of encroachments on fresh waters and protect fishermen's source of livelihood.



3. Shower of Rose petals at Water Bodies:

During the week, a large number of fishermen, farmers, herders and civil society activists thronged at different water bodies of the districts to pay tribute to the water. They formed a human chain and raised hands against grabbing of ocean and other fresh water bodies. They also showered rose petals in the streams amid echoing slogans against ocean grabbing.



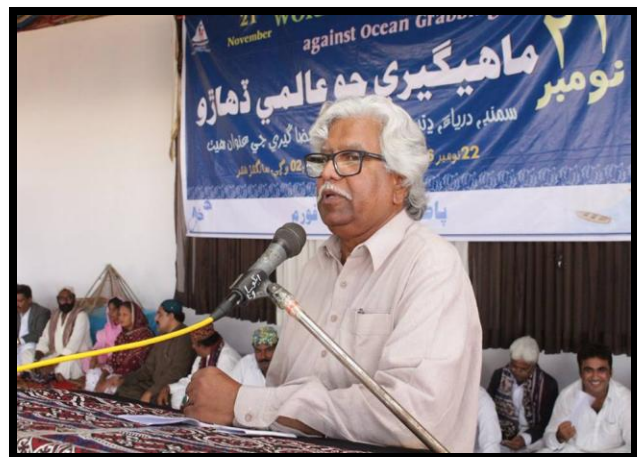
4. Meetings with Community and Civil Society on Ocean Grabbing:

The week greatly sensitized the fisher community and civil society about the term ocean grabbing and its antagonistic impacts on the fishing community. PFF Chairperson Mohammad Ali Shah and other leaders highlighted different projects in Sindh that fall under the grabbing of oceans. Mr. Shah said that projects like Zulfiqarabad would deprive over two million people, mostly fishermen of sources of their livelihood. The meetings strongly opposed the ocean grabbing and demanded the government to protect the fisher people.



5. Celebration of World Fisheries Day:

The week of action ended with the Celebration of World Fisheries Day on November 22, 2016 at Sanghar. The event attracted a large number of people hailing from Karachi, Thatta, Badin, Jamshoro, Hyderabad, Kashmore, Umerkot, Sujawal, Qamber and other parts of the Sindh. Addressing the big audience, PFF Chairperson Mohammad Ali Shah said that grabbing of water bodies cast an adverse impact on fisher communities, their lifestyles, cultural identity and livelihoods. He said that Sindh Assembly has passed a bill to abolish contract system on fresh waters but the law is yet to be followed as the influentials have occupied the inland water bodies. Condemning the different developmental projects like Coal Power Project in Jamshoro, Atomic Energy Project in Chasma & Zulfiqarabad Project in Thatta, Mr. Shah said that these would prove detrimental for the inhabitants and will devastate the marine and fresh water resources. He further said that fishermen deserve to continue earning their living



without any fear because they are natural custodians of these water resources. He also announced a big struggle against ocean grabbing throughout the province from December 01, 2016.

PFF Senior Vice Chairperson Fatima Majeed, General Secretary Saeed Baloch, Ayub Shan, Ramzan Mallah, Gulab Shah, Majeed Motani and others also spoke on the occasion and said that there are 1,209 fresh waters in Sindh, of which several are under control of feudal lords. They said that fishermen are not allowed to catch fish or move boats from jetties and demanded to stop the encroachment of the water bodies.

Mola Bux Mallah, local singer sang the songs depicted the lives of fisher community. He mesmerized the audience with his soothing voice and traditional styles.





MEDIA COVERAGE:

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1296984/fishermen-protest-encroachment-of-water-bodies>

<http://pakobserver.net/pff-activists-protest-nareri-lake-land-grabbing/>

