

Pakistan's Foreign Policy

RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS

Pakistan's Policy:

The main Indigenous Peoples in Pakistan are the Kochis, Rabari, Baluch, Bakarwal, Kehal, Jogi, Kabootra, Sanyasi and Kalash. The Kochis are mostly found in Karachi. They are a nomadic people originally from Afghanistan. The Rabari live in northwest Pakistan. The indigenous communities of Pakistan are still struggling for the recognition and protection of their rights. Laws such as the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, and articles 24, 152 and 173 of the constitution of Pakistan empower the government to deprive these communities from their lands and natural resources being utilized by them, necessary for their survival. These laws only offer monetary compensation to these communities after acquiring their lands which is abhorrent as money cannot protect them or guarantee their survival, after being driven out of their lands to construct mega projects.

These communities have been living on these lands before the promulgation of these laws and even before the British rule in the Subcontinent. In Sindh, indigenous communities like Bheel, Meghwar, Kolhi, Bagri, Jogi, and Oad as well as fishermen communities are neither formally recognized nor registered as indigenous communities, making them weak and vulnerable. Simply extending their lease, or occasional intervention by the superior judiciary offers no permanent solution whenever they are asked to prove their claims and ownership of their lands.

There is a dire need for introducing constitutional amendments to recognize and protect the rights of the indigenous peoples of Pakistan and to take proper measures for their registration by the federal as well as the provincial governments. This can be the first step in the right direction by the government to protect its people and uphold its international legal obligations.