Karachi Demolitions 2018

The demolition in Karachi is inhumane and shameless, took place in butal way without any prior notice.

ON the orders of the Supreme Court, over 15,000 shops, including leased ones, have been demolished in Karachi’s Saddar area and other markets. Over 4,000 hawkers have also been removed. Many of these shopkeepers and hawkers had been here for 50 years or more, and running businesses that their fathers had established.
There is also a possibility that Empress Market itself may lose its historical function and be turned into a museum or a high-end dining facility.

The objective is to rob high-value space from where the poor are located and use it for the benefit of the rich and the speculators who serve them. It is to replace hawkers and indigenous markets with malls and high-end retail outlets. That they can coexist with hawkers and Saddar’s history is beyond the comprehension of a paranoid elite and enemies of a multi-class city.

Displaced Venders of Saddar

Urban Resource Centre

Karachi Demolitions 2018

There is also a possibility that Empress Market itself may lose its historical function and be turned into a museum or a high-end dining facility.
One of the reasons given for the demolitions is the protection of heritage. But heritage is not simply a dead colonial stone building. It is a living thing, enjoyment and a form of participation for people from all walks of life, an expression of our diversity, which planners and politicians, if they have consciousness and sensitivity, can integrate into their plans as part of a larger city culture.
As a Karachiite, I feel ashamed at what has happened. I do not think that we can talk anymore, without embarrassment, about equity, culture, the city’s history, poverty alleviation or professional and academic values. And as for those who justify this shameful destruction on legal grounds, they must understand that apartheid was legal and that the demolition of Palestinian homes is also legal under Israeli law because they, like the Empress Market evictees, do not possess ownership papers.

Arif Hasan November 19th, 2018
Karachi Demolitions 2018

Displaced Shopkeepers of Empress Market

Urban Resource Centre