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Pakistan

Okara peasants crop destroyed by retired army officers

- News from around the world -

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Taking note of the blatant violation of tenant farmers' rights in Okara, the Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee has condemned the criminal action of retired army officers hired by Okara Military of destroying the maize crops of two tenants in Chak 18/4L late night on September 29.

The committee demands adequate compensation to the tenant farmers and registration of an FIR against the thuggish officers responsible for depriving the farmers of their source of livelihood.

According to residents of the village, a group of retired military officers working for the Okara Military drove their military vehicles on four acres of fields cultivated by Adnan and Haji Sarwar and razed the maize crop growing there.

Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee general secretary Farooq Tariq said the attack was entirely unprovoked and unwarranted as there was no immediate conflict between the tenants and the Okara Military Farms administration. It appears that the two tenants were deliberately targeted in order to harass and 'punish' them for supporting Mehar Abdul Sattar, the imprisoned general secretary of Anjuman-i-Mazareen Punjab.

Following the attack aimed to intimidate the tenants the residents of Chak 18/4L gathered on the site and held a demonstration. On Sunday, hundreds of tenants, including women and children, gathered at the fields and protested against the retired military officers who had run down Adnan and Haji Sarwar's crops.

Residents of the village say that Adnan and Haji Sarwar had been actively campaigning for the release of Sattar which is why they had been targeted in such a brutal manner.

Farooq Tariq said the Okara tenants have been victimised and harassed over the last few years for demanding land rights. By destroying their crops, the administration of the military farms appears to have adopted a new method of depriving the tenants of their livelihood, he added.

The Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee demands the registration of an FIR against those responsible for criminal act and insists that the Okara Military Farms administration must compensate the tenants. The PKRC demands that all fabricated cases against the tenants be withdrawn and that the issue be resolved through negotiations.

The land on which the crops were cultivated has been tilled by these tenants and their families for over a hundred years. Reports suggest that the Okara Military administration has now hired retired military officers to get this land vacated.

Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee

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