

## UNRAVELING LAND LITIGATION: UNDERSTANDING CAUSES, IMPACTS, AND STRATEGIES FOR RESOLUTION IN DISTRICT BAHAWALNAGAR

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to identify and analyses the determinants of land litigation in Pakistan by applying a qualitative approach. Data was collected through interviews with a diverse group of key stakeholders, including additional district collectors, deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners, tehsildars, patwaris, lawyers, and revenue officers. The study reveals that major determinants of land litigation include Land Mafias and Corruption, Legal and Administrative Issues, Urbanization and Development, Socio-Economic Factors, Disparities Created by the British Land Revenue System, and Colonial Land Grants and the Zamindari System. Each of these themes encompasses several specific factors contributing to land disputes. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay of these determinants and offer insights that can be applied to address and mitigate issues related to land mafias and corruption, legal and administrative inefficiencies, urbanization pressures, socio-economic disparities, historical land practices, and colonial legacies.*

**Key Words:** - *Land Mafias, Corruption, Legal & Administrative, socio-economic factors, colonial legacies, lands grants, zamindari system, and urbanization.*

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Arrive case may be a basic issue in Punjab, Pakistan, significantly built up in irrefutable, social, money related, and authentic complexities. Understanding the causes of these wrangle about requires a multifaceted examination of diverse components that contribute to the prevalence of land-related clashes inside the district. The colonial estate in Pakistan, particularly inside the region of Punjab, has had a critical influence on the plans of arrive ownership and the resulting prevalence of arrive case. In the midst of the British colonial period, the introduction of the arrive salary system on an awfully essential level changed the ordinary landholding plans (Shafi et al., 2022). The British organization permitted colossal tracts of arrive to supporters, military workforce, and neighborhood elites, making a course of competent landowners, or zamindars. These arrive blessings were regularly going with by legal titles and benefits that fortified the socio-economic dominance of these elites. This system driven to the concentration of unending agrarian lands inside the hands of numerous, though the bigger portion of the nation people remained landless or held insignificant plots. The aberrations made by this system sowed the seeds of future clashes, as arrive have to be a picture of control and wealth (Shafi et al., 2022).

Besides, the arrive income framework presented by the British was planned fundamentally to maximize income collection, instead of to guarantee evenhanded arrive dissemination or secure

arrive rights for the broader populace. The accentuation on income collection driven to the codification of arrive records that were regularly wrong, fragmented, or controlled by those in control (Shafi et al., 2022). This made a complex and regularly murky arrive residency framework, where the genuine possession of arrive was as often as possible challenged. Over time, these mistakes in arrive records got to be a noteworthy source of debate, as diverse parties laid claim to the same packages of arrive based on clashing documentation. The need of a vigorous and straightforward arrive organization framework amid the colonial period laid the establishment for the broad arrive case seen in Pakistan nowadays (Imran et al., 2024).

The segment of British India in 1947 advance exacerbated land-related issues in Punjab. The mass movement that went with the parcel brought about the uprooting of millions of individuals, numerous of whom were settled on lands cleared out behind by those who fled to India. The method of distributing these evacuee properties was frequently aimless and ineffectively overseen, driving to hazy arrive titles and covering claims (Khan et al., 2023). Decades afterward, these chronicled grievances continue to fuel arrive debate, as relatives of the initial landowners challenge the legitimacy of the titles held by those who were settled on their ancestors' arrival. This circumstance is advanced complicated by the bequest of the British legitimate framework, which, although giving a system for arrival debate, frequently demonstrates to be moderate, cumbersome, and ill-equipped to bargain with the complexities of arrival possession issues established within the colonial period (Ali, 2020).

In conclusion, the colonial bequest in Punjab, Pakistan, has cleared out a permanent stamp on the region's arrival possession designs, making a scene full of debate and case. The concentration of arrival among some effective elites, the control of arrival records, and the chaotic resettlement preparation amid segment have all contributed to a framework where arrival proprietorship is habitually challenged (Rubab et al., 2023). These chronicled variables, combined with the persevering impact of colonial-era lawful and authoritative hones, have made the case an unavoidable issue in modern-day Pakistan, especially in Punjab. Tending to these challenges requires a nuanced understanding of colonial history and its lasting impacts on arriving residency and debate within the locale (Ferdousi et al., 2020).

### **1.2. Legal & Administrative Issues and Land Litigation: -**

In Punjab, Pakistan, the relationship between legitimate and authoritative issues plays a pivotal part in the multiplication of arriving cases. The lawful system overseeing arrive possession is regularly obsolete and divided, which creates critical challenges in guaranteeing clear and reliable property rights. Laws such as the Arrive Income Act of 1967, whereas foundational, have not kept pace with advanced advancements, driving ambiguities in proprietorship and legacy rights (Bennett et al., 2021). These legitimate complexities are compounded by covering wards and clashing elucidations of arrive laws, making it troublesome for people to discover their authentic rights. Besides, the need for a bound together, overhauled arrival registry frequently comes about in different claims over the same arriving piece, fueling the debate. The nonattendance of clear legitimate rules and the moderate pace of legal procedures make it troublesome for courts to resolve these clashes productively, regularly clearing out debate uncertain for a long time (Kartika, 2021).

On the regulatory side, debasement and wastefulness inside the arrive, and income divisions, worsen these lawful challenges. Arrive records in Punjab are as often as possible altered with, and false passages are common, encouraged by a need for straightforwardness and responsibility within the regulatory handle. The change preparation, which is basic for exchanging

property rights, is frequently controlled by persuasive people, driving illicit exchanges and debate over legitimate proprietorship (Sharoon et al., 2024). Furthermore, the need for digitization in arrival records administration implies that numerous records are either misplaced or controlled, making it troublesome to confirm the genuineness of possession claims. These authoritative disappointments not as it were caused coordinated hurt to landowners but also weakened belief within the lawful framework, compelling wronged parties to look for legal change. As a result, the legitimate and authoritative lacks in Punjab's arrival administration framework are profoundly entwined, each intensifying the other and contributing to the high frequency of arrive cases within the locale. Comprehensive changes in both lawful and regulatory hones are basic to decrease arrival debate and guarantee a more fair and proficient arrival administration framework (Shah & Zakir, 2022).

### **1.3. Socio-Economic Factors and Land Litigation: -**

The connections between social and economic factors and the reasons for land disputes in Punjab, Pakistan, are closely linked. This reflects the complicated nature of a society mainly focused on farming. Land in Punjab is not just a piece of property; it is very important for economic stability, social standing, and influence. Land disputes are a common and often heated problem, with social and economic issues influencing both the reasons for these conflicts and the outcomes of the legal battles (Shafi et al., 2022)

#### **1.3.1. Economic Disparities and Land Disputes: -**

Punjab's economy depends a lot on farming. Land is the main way people earn money and make a living, especially in the countryside. There are big differences in wealth, and many people live in poverty. For many people, land is the most important thing they own, and arguments about who owns the land or where the borders are can put their livelihoods at risk. These financial problems often cause arguments because people or families want to keep or gain more land, sometimes by going to court. In a situation where there aren't many job opportunities, owning more land can help people feel more secure financially. This pushes people, especially those from low-income backgrounds, to fight in court to protect or get land, even when their claims may not be very strong.

#### **1.3.2. Land Records and Judicial Inefficiencies: -**

The problems and lack of clear information in managing land lead to more land disputes. People often say that Punjab's land record system is old-fashioned, corrupt, and hard for regular citizens to use (Zulfiqar, 2022). This leads to problems because confusing or changed records make it hard to prove who really owns something. The court system has a lot of delayed cases and slow procedures, which makes things even harder (Ejaz & Mallawaarachchi, 2023). For people who have little money, the high cost of long legal battles can be very harmful. However, they often have no option but to get involved in these fights to safeguard their rights (Rahman & Hossain, 2020). Richer people or families might take advantage of these problems, using their money to get what they want, which keeps economic gaps between them and others (Abbas et al. , 2022)

#### **1.3.3. Social Structure and Power Dynamics: -**

Apart from money issues, the community and relationships in Punjab are very important in land disputes. The people in the province are very connected to their families and respect social ranks. Owning land is important and is linked to a person's social position and influence. Rich families

who own large areas of land, known as feudal lords, have a lot of power in local politics and greatly affect local institutions, like the legal system. These families might use their influence to support or challenge land ownership claims, which can result in long legal fights (Dell'Angelo et al. , 2021) Often, land disputes are not just about making money but also about keeping or increasing social status and political influence. This situation shows that land disputes are often more about the relationships and power struggle within the community than about the land itself.

#### **1.3.4. Impact of Urbanization and Economic Changes: -**

The growth of cities and changes in the economy are also causing land disputes in Punjab. As cities grow and more industries are built, the price of land close to these areas has gone up a lot, causing more arguments over land that used to not be very valuable. Many people are moving from the countryside to cities looking for better jobs. This has caused problems over land that people have inherited, as landowners or their family members come back to claim their land. The mix of rural and city lifestyles leads to new types of land disagreements, making it harder to understand how social and economic issues connect to land legal battles (Torre et al. , 2021)

#### **1.4 Statement of Problem**

A report from the Punjab Board of Revenue says that many court cases in Punjab are about land problems. It is believed that more than 60% of court cases about civil issues in Punjab are about who owns land and property rights. As of 2021, about 1. 2 million land cases were waiting to be settled in the courts of Punjab. This backlog shows how slowly the legal system works and how complicated land disputes are in the area (Shafi et al. , 2022).

In Bahawalnagar district, Punjab, Pakistan, there has been a steady and worrying rise in land disputes in recent years. The increase in legal fights about land ownership, property lines, and inheritance has put a lot of pressure on local courts, causing delays in the legal process. The large number of unfinished cases slows down the legal system and makes people lose trust in the law. As more land disputes remain unsolved, the frustration and worry of the people involved increase, making life in the area even more difficult.

The increase in land disputes in Bahawalnagar has led to more social problems and violent crimes, such as murder. Land is very important in this farming community, and arguments over land often cause serious fights between families and groups. The serious issues in these disagreements, along with the slow legal process, have led some people to act on their own. This has caused violent clashes and even deaths. This rise in violence puts lives at risk and makes the already tense situation worse, leading to a ongoing cycle of fighting and revenge that is hard to stop.

Also, the widespread problem of land disputes in Bahawalnagar is hurting the local economy. The confusion about who owns the land and the chance of facing a long legal fight makes people hesitant to invest in farming and other businesses that rely on land. This makes it hard for the economy to grow and develop in the area because local farmers and possible investors are hesitant to invest in land that might have disputes. The ongoing land problems are hurting the economy, which leads to more poverty and unemployment, making the area less stable. It is very important to find out why land disputes are increasing and to come up with good solutions to these problems. This will help ease the pressure on the courts, lower social tensions, and encourage economic growth in Bahawalnagar.

#### **1.5 Research Objectives: -**

Here are the goals of this study:

To find out what causes land disputes in Bahawalnagar related to colonial land grants and the zamindari system, and to offer solutions.

- To look into what causes land disputes in District Bahawalnagar related to British land tax systems and to suggest ways to solve these problems.
- To find out what causes legal and administrative problems with land disputes in Bahawalnagar and to come up with solutions.
- To look into the social and economic reasons that cause land disputes in District Bahawalnagar and to find ways to solve these problems.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Participants**

In this consider, a fastidiously chosen test comprising both resigned and serving authorities, counting Extra Commissioners, Delegate Commissioners, Collaborator Commissioners, Tehsildars, Naib Tehsildars, Patwaris, legal counselors, and Locale Legal Officers, was utilized. These people were chosen since they hold significant parts within the organization and lawful administration of arrive issues inside Area Bahawalnagar, Punjab, Pakistan. Their obligations in managing arrive records, settling debate, and settling cases position them as key partners with a significant understanding of the complexities surrounding arrive case within the locale. Their coordinate inclusion within the day by day operations related to arrive administration gives them a special point of view on the causes and results of such debate.

### **2.2. Data collection**

In this consideration, information was collected through organized interviews with a carefully chosen test of resigned and serving authorities, including Extra Commissioners, Appointee Commissioners, Collaborator Commissioners, Tehsildars, Naib Tehsildars, Patwaris, legal counselors, and Locale Legal Officers. These people were chosen for their basic parts within the organization and lawful oversight of arrival issues in Locale Bahawalnagar, Punjab, Pakistan. Given their broad involvement and in-depth information of arrival administration and litigation, they were well-positioned to supply valuable insights into the causes of arrival debate within the locale.

### **2.3. Data Analysis**

Topical examination could be a vigorous and adaptable strategy utilized to analyze qualitative data, such as meet transcripts. Underneath could be a nitty gritty strategy for performing topical examination on the meet information collected from resigned and serving Extra Commissioners, Appointee Commissioners, Collaborator Commissioners, Tehsildars, Naib Tehsildars, Patwaris, legal counselors, and Area Legal Officers to get it the causes of arrive case in Locale Bahawalnagar:

#### **2.3.1. Familiarization with the Data**

Start by writing down the interview notes if they were recorded. Please write this exactly as it is to make sure it's correct.

Read and re-read: Go through the transcript several times to understand the information better. This step helps you deeply understand the material and find early ideas or trends.



Note-taking: While doing this, write down your first thoughts and any common ideas or interesting things you notice from the data.

### 2.3.2. Generating Initial Codes: -

- **Coding:** Efficiently go through the information and relegate codes to pieces of content that are significant to the inquiry about address. Codes are brief names that portray the substance or meaning of a particular section of information.
- **Manual Coding:** You'll be able to perform coding physically by highlighting content and explaining it with codes.
- **Inclusive Coding:** Guarantee simply codes all information fragments that show up important, indeed on the off chance that they appear to negate each other. The objective is to capture the complexity of the information.
- **Coding Over Parts:** Since the respondents come from distinctive parts, it is vital to consider how their positions might impact their perspectives on arrive case. Codes might contrast depending on whether the respondent may be a lawful proficient, a regulatory officer, or an arrive record guardian.

### 2.3.3. Searching for Themes: -

- **Collating Codes into Subjects:** After coding the information, begin collating comparable codes into potential subjects. A topic speaks to a broader design that captures something critical around the information in connection to the investigative address.
- **Thematic Outline:** Make a topical outline that outwardly speaks to the connections between distinctive codes, sub-themes, and overarching subjects. This step makes a difference in organizing and refining the distinguished subjects.
- **Identifying Designs Over Respondent Categories:** Consider whether certain subjects are more noticeable in reactions from particular categories of respondents (e.g., Patwaris versus Legal Officers) and how this might relate to their parts in arrive case.

### 2.3.4. Reviewing Themes: -

- **Reviewing at the Code Level:** Re-examine the subjects in connection to the coded information fragments. Guarantee that the topics precisely speak to the basic information which there's coherence inside subjects and clear qualifications between them.
- **Reviewing at the Data Set Level:** Go back to the whole information set and guarantee that the topics work within the setting of the information as an entirety. At this arrangement, you will have to refine topics, blend them, or dispose of those that are not backed by adequate information.
- **Checking for Topical Immersion:** Decide whether the distinguished topics cover all pertinent angles of the information. Topical immersion happens when no modern topics arise from the information, demonstrating that the investigation is careful.

### 2.3.5. Defining and Naming Themes: -

- **Refining Subjects:** Characterize each topic clearly and indicate the angle of the information it captures. Guarantee that each subject is unmistakable, centered, and includes a clear scope.
- **Naming Subjects:** Allot brief and graphic names to each subject. These names ought to pass on the quintessence of the topic and be effortlessly reasonable.

- **Developing Sub-themes:** In case a subject is wide, consider breaking it down into sub-themes to capture more particular designs inside it. For case, a topic on Administrative Challenges might have sub-themes like Bureaucratic Delays and Inadequate Arrive Records

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 3.1. Demographics and Socio-Economics Characteristics of the Respondents: -

**Table-I: - Demographic & Socio-Economic Characteristics Participants**

Demographics	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	38	88	88
	Female	5	12	12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	
Age	18-25	4	9	9
	26-35	12	28	37
	36-45	20	47	84
	46-55	5	12	95
	Above 55	2	5	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	
Designation	Additional Commissioner	2	5	5
	Deputy Commissioner	2	5	9
	Assistant Commissioner	5	12	16
	Tehsildar	10	23	35
	Naib Tehsildar	10	23	47
	Patwari	10	23	47
	Lawyers	4	9	100
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	
Qualification	Matriculation	5	12	12
	Intermediate	7	16	28
	Graduation	9	21	49
	Master	14	33	81
	MPhil. or Above	8	19	100
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	
Experience	1-5 (Years)	4	9	9
	6-10 (Years)	8	19	28
	11-15 (Years)	15	35	63
	15-20 (Years)	7	16	79
	Above 20 (Years)	9	21	100
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100</b>	

### 3.2. Categories of Colonial Land Grants and Zamindari System in the Context of Land Litigation and Way Forward: -

The details regarding various themes on Colonial Land Grants and the Zamindari system and the way forward to counter these problems have been given as under.

**Table No.2 Themes and Categories of Colonial Land Grants and Zamindari System**

Sr. #	Themes and Categories of Colonial Land Grants and Zamindari System	Frequencies
1	Inheritance Conflicts Among Zamindar Families	20
2	Manipulation of Land Records	15
3	Absence of Land Reforms	14
4	Impact on Rural Power Dynamics	10
5	Partition-Related Land Disputes	9
6	Retention of Colonial-Era Legal Framework	8
7	Resistance to Land Redistribution	8
8	Creation of Landed Elite Class	7
9	Concentration of Land Ownership	6

The colonial land grant and zamindari systems in South Asia, particularly in what is now Pakistan and India, significantly shaped rural power dynamics and land ownership patterns. A key theme emerging from this legacy is the **inheritance conflicts among zamindar families**. With vast estates passed down through generations, disputes often arose over inheritance, complicating the already intricate legal landscape. These conflicts, rooted in familial rivalries, frequently led to fragmentation of land holdings and legal battles, undermining the economic stability of the zamindar class and increasing tensions within rural communities.

Another critical issue is the **manipulation of land records**. During and after the colonial period, influential landholders often manipulated official land records to consolidate their holdings. This manipulation, coupled with the **absence of comprehensive land reforms**, allowed large estates to remain intact, perpetuating inequities in land distribution. **Partition-related land disputes** further aggravated this situation, as families displaced during the partition of British India often found their ancestral lands occupied by others. The **retention of colonial-era legal frameworks** and the lack of robust reform measures enabled the continuity of these inequities, fostering resentment among landless peasants and those advocating for more equitable land distribution. As a result, the colonial land policies created and reinforced a landed elite, concentrating land ownership in the hands of a few, thus skewing rural power dynamics and stalling socioeconomic development.

### 3.3. Categories of Legal and Administrative Issues in the context of Land Litigation and Way Forward: -



The details regarding various themes pertaining to Legal and Administrative Issues and way forward to counter these problems have been given as under.

**Table No.3 Themes and Categories of Legal and Administrative Issues**

Sr. #	Themes and Categories of Legal and Administrative Issues	Frequencies
1	Corruption in Land Administration	27
2	Complex Legal Framework	25
3	Lengthy Judicial Processes	20
4	Political Interference	19
5	Resistance to Land Reforms	18
6	Bureaucratic Delays	15
7	Lack of Legal Awareness	13
8	Multiple and Conflicting Land Titles	12
9	Inconsistent Application of Land Laws	12
10	Inefficient Land Record System	10
11	Lack of Digitization	8
12	Inheritance and Succession Laws	8
13	Overlapping Jurisdictions	7
14	Inadequate Land Surveys and Demarcations	6
15	Weak Dispute Resolution Mechanisms	5

The legal and administrative framework governing land in South Asia, particularly in countries like Pakistan and India, is fraught with inefficiencies and corruption. The most prevalent issue is **corruption in land administration**, where officials often manipulate land records and procedures to benefit influential individuals, exacerbating inequities in land ownership. This corruption is closely linked to the **complex legal framework**, which, with its overlapping statutes and multiple land-related laws, becomes an obstacle for the common citizen. Navigating this legal maze is further complicated by **lengthy judicial processes**, where land disputes can languish in courts for decades, denying timely justice to rightful landowners and creating opportunities for further manipulation.

Another significant theme is **political interference**, where powerful political actors often sway land administration decisions, undermining the integrity of the system. **Resistance to land reforms** from both political elites and landowners further compounds the issue, as vested interests prevent the implementation of policies aimed at equitable land distribution. The system is also hampered by **bureaucratic delays** and the **inefficient land record system**, which leads to errors in land titles and ownership documents. A lack of proper **digitization** of records makes these errors difficult to rectify and allows for the persistence of **multiple and conflicting land titles**. This lack of modernization, combined with a **lack of legal awareness** among the public, makes land-related disputes highly complex and difficult to resolve.

Furthermore, **inconsistent application of land laws** and **overlapping jurisdictions** create confusion regarding land ownership and management, while **inadequate land surveys and**

**demarcations** add to the disputes. The weak dispute resolution mechanisms and ineffective enforcement of inheritance laws, particularly regarding succession, further deteriorate the ability of citizens to resolve land issues fairly. Overall, these legal and administrative issues create a deeply flawed system that hinders equitable land distribution, justice, and socioeconomic development.

### 3.4. Categories of Socio-Economic Factors in the context of Land Litigation and Way Forward: -

The details regarding various themes pertaining to socio-economic factors and way forward to counter these problems have been given as under.

**Table No.4 Themes and Categories of Socio-Economic Factors**

Sr. #	Themes and Categories of Socio-Economic Factors	Frequencies
1	Inheritance Disputes	24
2	Lack of Economic Alternatives	20
3	Land Grabbing and Encroachments	18
4	Speculation and Real Estate Development	16
5	Rural Power Dynamics	14
6	Unequal Access to Legal Resources	12
7	Land as a Symbol of Power and Status	10
8	Migration and Displacement	9
9	Economic Value of Land	8
10	Urbanization and Population Growth	6
11	Cultural and Traditional Practices	6
12	Poverty and Landlessness	5
13	Lack of Awareness and Education	4
14	Economic Disparities	3
15	Gender Inequality	2

Socio-economic factors play a pivotal role in shaping land ownership patterns and access to resources in many regions, especially in South Asia. **Inheritance disputes** are one of the most frequent issues, where familial conflicts over land division lead to prolonged legal battles and fragmentation of land holdings. Such disputes not only affect the economic stability of families but also destabilize rural power dynamics, where land ownership is tied to authority and influence. The **lack of economic alternatives** in rural areas often forces individuals to remain tied to the land as their primary source of livelihood, perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependence on agriculture.

Another prominent issue is **land grabbing and encroachments**, where influential individuals or groups illegally seize land, displacing rightful owners, especially the poor. This, combined with **speculation and real estate development**, has driven land prices up in many regions, making it difficult for ordinary citizens to own or retain land. In rural settings, **land is seen as a symbol of power and status**, further entrenching social hierarchies. Economic disparities are compounded by

**unequal access to legal resources**, where the wealthy and powerful are able to navigate the legal system more effectively than marginalized communities.

Furthermore, **migration and displacement**, whether due to economic hardships or environmental factors, has led to shifts in land ownership patterns, exacerbating tensions between communities. As **urbanization and population growth** accelerate, rural land is increasingly being converted for urban development, creating pressure on the traditional agrarian economy. **Cultural and traditional practices** also play a role, often dictating how land is inherited and managed, while issues like **gender inequality** mean women face significant barriers to land ownership. Together, these socio-economic factors create a complex web of challenges that hinder equitable land distribution and exacerbate poverty and inequality.

### 3.5. Categories of Land Mafias and Corruption in the context of Land Litigation and Way Forward: -

**Table No.5 Themes and Categories of Land Mafias and Corruption**

Sr. #	Themes and Categories of Land Mafias and Corruption	Frequencies
1	Forgery of Land Documents	27
2	Organized Land Grabbing	25
3	Bribery in Land Registration and Transfer	24
4	Collusion with Government Officials	20
5	Fraudulent Housing Schemes	19
6	Creation of Fake Land Titles	18
7	Influence in Political and Legal Spheres	17
8	Blocking of Land Reforms	16
9	Encroachment on Public and Communal Land	15
10	Manipulation of Legal System	15
11	Intimidation and Coercion	11
12	Illegal Land Subdivision	10
13	Illegal Occupation of Agricultural Land	9
14	Eviction of Legitimate Owners	7
15	Corruption in Land Surveys and Demarcations	4

Land mafias and corruption form a deeply entrenched issue in land governance, particularly in countries with weak regulatory frameworks and poor enforcement. **Forgery of land documents** is a widespread problem, where fraudulent papers are created to illegally transfer ownership of valuable properties. This practice is often accompanied by **organized land grabbing**, where groups with financial or political influence forcibly occupy land, displacing legitimate owners or communal landholders. **Bribery in land registration and transfer** is another major issue, where corrupt officials accept payments to alter records or fast-track illegal transfers, making it difficult for rightful owners to maintain control over their land.

The **collusion with government officials** allows land mafias to operate with impunity, as influential actors in local administration often turn a blind eye to illegal activities. **Fraudulent housing schemes**, where fake real estate projects are marketed to unsuspecting buyers, lead to financial ruin for many and further enrich these corrupt networks. The **creation of fake land titles** exacerbates these issues, enabling mafias to secure control over land parcels without legal claims, which they can then sell or lease for profit. These land mafias also exert **influence in political and legal spheres**, using their power to block or delay land reforms that could disrupt their operations or reduce their control.

Furthermore, land mafias are known for **encroaching on public and communal land**, using intimidation and coercion to silence opposition from local communities or legitimate landholders. The **manipulation of the legal system** ensures that even when cases are brought to court, justice is either delayed or denied, allowing these corrupt networks to continue their operations. **Eviction of legitimate owners** is often carried out with the help of illegal force, and in many cases, **illegal land subdivision** and occupation of agricultural lands further deepen the crisis. These systemic issues, compounded by **corruption in land surveys and demarcations**, leave little room for transparency or justice, making land mafias a formidable force that undermines property rights and fuels inequality.

#### 4.1 Conclusion

The intricate web of land-related issues in South Asia, encompassing colonial legacies, socio economic factors, legal and administrative inefficiencies, and the pervasive influence of land mafias, reflects a deeply entrenched system of inequality and corruption. From inheritance disputes and the manipulation of land records to political interference and organized land grabbing, these challenges underscore the complexity of land governance. The lack of meaningful land reforms, coupled with unequal access to legal resources and bureaucratic corruption, continues to exacerbate rural power dynamics, economic disparities, and the exploitation of vulnerable communities. Addressing these multifaceted issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes legal modernization, land reforms, digitization of records, and strengthened enforcement mechanisms to ensure equitable land distribution and justice for all.

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