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FOLLOW UN NORMS FOR EVICTIONS

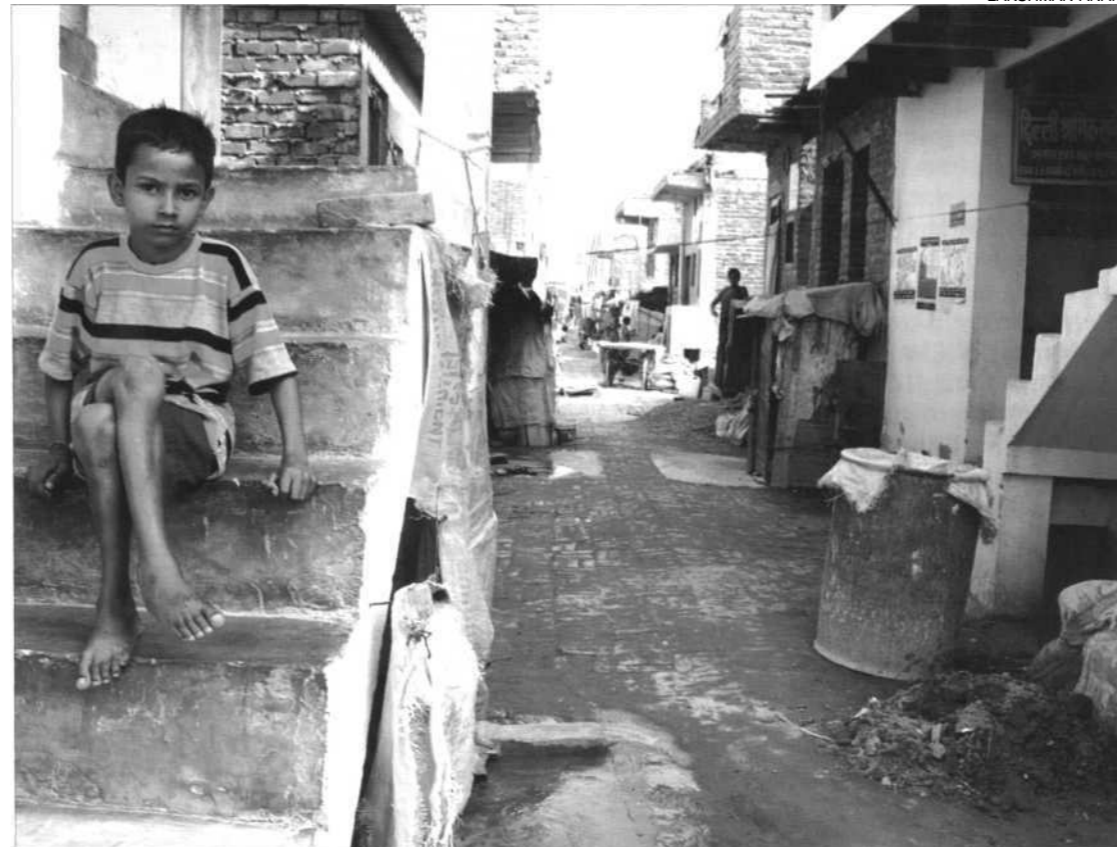
It is the working class which runs the city. Yet the urban poor are being forcibly pushed out to fulfill middle class aspirations of world class cities. MILOON KOTHARI AND SHIVANI CHAUDHRY

City - a conglomeration of spaces - imagined and real, central and peripheral, friendly and hostile, permanent and transient... And into this web of stratified realities of existence, emerges a dominating power play of misplaced priorities, an ideology of profit that disregards human rights and the basic needs of the majority.

No longer perceived as inclusionary, cities are increasingly being envisioned as 'world class' spaces characterised by glitz, glamour and gentrification. Urban planners focus on the perpetuation of elitist models of urbanisation in which the poor and working class, on whose blood, sweat and toil runs the machinery of the city, are denied their human right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate housing, work, health, water and food.

Large infrastructure projects, mining, dams, natural resource exploitation, rural unemployment, collapse of agriculture, declining wages and loss of means of subsistence, displace millions from rural areas forcing them to move to cities in hope of livelihood and survival. But the hostile city environment and the lack of affordable housing and basic services forces many into slums and highly inadequate and perilous living conditions, often at grave risk to their health and security. The struggle for construction of identity and a life of dignity for the working poor is further imperiled by the systematic destruction of their homes and working spaces.

Forced evictions and displacement from homes and lands is now a global phenomenon which has led to dispossession at an unprecedented level. Forced evictions constitute a gross violation of human rights and indicate a systematic disregard of recognised human rights standards on the part of states. Forced evictions and displacement occur due to different reasons. Many are so-called 'development-based' evictions, which include evictions often planned or conducted with the justification or under the pretext of serving the 'public good,' such as those linked to slum-clearance drives, large-scale infrastructure projects, and land-acquisition measures associated with urban renewal, housing renovation, city beautification, sporting events, highways, shopping malls, forced land acquisition, natural resource exploitation, and most recently, Special Economic Zones (SEZs).



LAKSHMAN ANAND

Bawana resettlement: people lost their jobs, children their schools and childhood

Evictions are also on the rise due to the reluctance of states to control speculation in housing and property.

The impact on those affected can often be characterised as a human tragedy. In the wake of forced evictions, people are often left homeless and destitute, without means of earning a livelihood and, in practice, with no effective access to legal or other remedies. Generally, forced evictions affect the poorest, the socially and economically most marginalised sectors of society, and intensify inequality and social conflict, contributing to segregation and the creation of 'apartheid cities'.

Most of these 'development-based' evictions have one or several common features that contravene recognised human rights standards. Lack of prior notice, inadequate or no consultation, absence of information-sharing, no possibility of participation in the decision-making process for those affected, lack of housing alternatives and the

use of excessive force to carry out evictions, are disturbing trends.

The eviction of individuals and communities from their homes and habitat, often accompanied by violence, is a phenomenon that has reached an unprecedented scale and continues to accelerate across India. Urban land is increasingly being coveted for profitable ventures at the cost of the lives and livelihoods of the working poor. In many instances these evictions are initiated by state agencies (often in collusion with landowners, land mafia, the corporate sector, and other direct beneficiaries)

Over the last two decades, discrimination and violence against the urban poor has intensified, and disturbingly, even gained legal sanction from the judiciary. Recent judgements of both the Supreme Court and High Courts have overturned a decade of progressive judgements of the eighties by blatantly going against people and denying the

