

POWER, PLOTS, AND PROSECUTION: UNRAVELING THE ROLE OF LAND MAFIAS AND CORRUPTION IN PAKISTAN'S LEGAL LAND BATTLES

DR. ZAHID IQBAL

Assistant Registrar

University of Okara, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: zahidiqballak@gmail.com

SHAZIA AKRAM

PhD Scholar,

Times Institute, Multan, Pakistan

Email: shaziaakramnayaab98@gmail.com

DR. RASHID MAQBOOL

Incharge Main Library, University of Okara.

Email: rashid_gee@yahoo.com

MUHAMMAD ATIF ISHAQ

M.Phil. in Sociology

University of Okara.

Email: atifmirza1989@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The core objective of this study is to explore the key factors associated with land mafias and corruption within various government departments and agencies that contribute to the rising number of land litigation and land dispute cases in Pakistan. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing structured interviews and focus group discussions to collect data from land revenue officers and lawyers actively involved in land litigation processes. Based on the data analysis, the study identified fifteen critical themes that significantly contribute to land disputes and litigation. These include: forgery of land documents, organized land grabbing, bribery in land registration and transfer, collusion with government officials, fraudulent housing schemes, creation of fake land titles, political and legal influence, obstruction of land reforms, encroachment on public and communal lands, manipulation of the legal system, intimidation and coercion, illegal land subdivision, unlawful occupation of agricultural land, eviction of legitimate landowners, and corruption in land surveys and demarcation processes. The findings of this study are intended to empower policymakers and stakeholders to formulate targeted policies, rules, and regulations based on these themes, thereby helping to reduce land litigation cases linked to land mafias and institutional corruption in Pakistan.

Keywords: Land Mafia, Corruptions, Land Litigation, Land Disputes, Prosecution.

1. Introduction

Land-related litigation in Pakistan has been increasing at an alarming rate, largely due to the pervasive influence of land mafias and corruption. According to the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan (2021), approximately 60% of all civil cases in Pakistani courts are related to land and property disputes. A report by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) further reveals that it can take up to 30 years to resolve a typical land dispute, largely due to legal loopholes

and bureaucratic delays (PIDE, 2020). In addition, Transparency International Pakistan (2022) ranks the land administration sector among the top three most corrupt sectors in the country. These statistics highlight not only the legal burden posed by land disputes but also point to systemic weaknesses exploited by corrupt actors and organized land mafias.

Land mafias, often supported by corrupt officials, manipulate land records, encroach on public and private properties, and exploit legal ambiguities to create or prolong litigation (Ahmed & Rashid, 2021). These criminal networks are particularly active in urban centers like Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, where rising land values have intensified illegal land grabbing activities (Khan, 2019). Corrupt practices within local land revenue departments—such as bribe-taking for altering land records, forging ownership documents, and delaying dispute resolution—create fertile ground for litigation (World Bank, 2020). These manipulations not only increase the number of land disputes but also erode trust in public institutions and weaken the rule of law (Transparency International, 2022).

While several studies have addressed the issues of land disputes and corruption separately, there is limited research focusing on the combined impact of land mafias and corruption on the litigation process in Pakistan. Most available literature tends to generalize corruption or land encroachment without linking it to specific legal consequences such as prolonged litigation, institutional overload, or displacement (Iqbal & Siddiqui, 2018). Furthermore, existing studies often lack qualitative insight from administrative officials, legal practitioners, and victims involved in land disputes. This research aims to fill this critical gap by exploring the mechanisms through which land mafias and corrupt practices drive legal conflicts over land and by identifying potential policy solutions grounded in field data.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policymakers, legal authorities, and civil society about the structural and institutional vulnerabilities exploited by corrupt actors and land mafias. Understanding these dynamics is essential to formulating effective land governance reforms (Ali & Nasir, 2020). By shedding light on how corrupt practices and organized land crimes escalate litigation, this research can guide anti-corruption frameworks and urban planning policies to prevent encroachments and false claims. It also contributes to the broader discourse on judicial reform, helping courts and revenue departments adopt more transparent and efficient mechanisms (World Bank, 2020).

In addition, the study's findings can serve as a strategic input for legislative bodies to strengthen legal frameworks related to land tenure, digitization of land records, and accountability of revenue officers. A well-informed legal and administrative framework is key to reducing land conflicts, restoring public confidence in institutions, and protecting the rights of lawful landowners (UN-Habitat, 2021). Given Pakistan's rapidly urbanizing population and increasing demand for land, curbing the influence of mafias and corruption is vital for sustainable development and social stability (Kugelman, 2021). Therefore, this research is both timely and critical to addressing one of the country's most persistent governance challenges.

The remaining sections of this research paper are organized as follows: Section 2 presents a comprehensive literature review related to land mafia activities, corruption, and their influence on land litigation in Pakistan. Section 3 outlines the qualitative methodology employed for data collection, including structured interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders. Finally, Section 4 highlights the results of the study by identifying and discussing the major themes that emerged, particularly those related to the operations of land mafias and the role of corruption in escalating land disputes.

2. Literature Review

Arrive case in Pakistan is essentially impacted by the exercises of arrive mafias and the inescapable debasement inside arrive organization frameworks. These variables not as it were worsen existing arrive debate but too make modern clashes, frequently driving to delayed and complex lawful fights. This writing survey investigates how arrive mafias and debasement contribute to the scene of arrive case in Pakistan, analyzing their affect on arrive proprietorship, the lawful framework, and the in general administration of arrive assets (Khan et al., 2023). Arrive mafias, frequently comprising of capable people or bunches, have ended up progressively persuasive in Pakistana urban centers. These mafias regularly work by illicitly involving arrive, controlling arrive records, and locks in in false exchanges (Shafi et al., 2022).

The fast urbanization and rising request for arrive in cities like Karachi and Lahore have given prolific ground for the development of arrive mafias. These bunches regularly work with exemption, leveraging their associations with political elites, law authorization, and bureaucratic authorities to secure and keep up control over profitable arrive (Abbas et al., 2022). The mafias utilize restraint, savagery, and false documentation to seize control of arrive, habitually uprooting true blue proprietors or tenants within the prepare. The coming about debate over arrive proprietorship and inhabitation rights regularly lead to case, as casualties of arrive snatching look for to recover their property through legitimate channels. Be that as it may, the inclusion of arrive mafias in these debate frequently complicates and draws out the case prepare, as they may utilize their impact to control legitimate results (Hansen, 2023).

The obsolete and frequently ineffectively kept up arrive record frameworks in Pakistan are profoundly helpless to altering and fraud. Arrive mafias abuse these shortcomings to change proprietorship records, produce arrive titles, and make false deeds, driving to debate over the authenticity of arrive proprietorship. These debate as often as possible result in case, as influenced parties challenge the legitimacy of the controlled records in court (Bachriadi & Aspinall, 2023). However, the people who stand up to arrive snatching or endeavor to attest their lawful rights regularly confront dangers, physical savagery, and indeed kill. These strategies make an environment of fear and constraint, preventing numerous casualties from seeking after lawful activity. Be that as it may, when debate do reach the courts, the association of viciousness and terrorizing includes another layer of complexity to the case handle, frequently driving to delayed and petulant lawful fights (Nasir, 2024).

Additionally, the bribery, favoritism, and the control of arrive records are broad hones among authorities mindful for keeping up arrive registries. These degenerate hones make critical challenges for individuals looking for to set up or guard their arrive rights, as false records and changed documentation can weaken authentic claims. The coming about debate over arrive titles and proprietorship regularly lead to case, as parties look for to resolve clashes through the courts (Warf & Warf, 2019). The impact of degenerate hones amplifies into the legal framework, where bribes and political weight can influence the choices of judges, legal counselors, and court authorities. This debasement undermines the judgment of the lawful handle, driving to one-sided or unjustifiable decisions in arrive debate. As a result, indeed when people seek after legitimate activity to resolve arrive clashes, they may discover that the result is skewed in favor of those with more prominent money related assets or political associations (Baig et al., 2020).

Moreover bureaucratic delays, wastefulness, and the request for bribes regularly ruin the determination of arrive debate through authoritative channels. When people are incapable to resolve clashes through arrive income divisions or other authoritative bodies, they are more likely

to resort to case as a implies of securing their rights. Be that as it may, the association of degenerate authorities within the case prepare can encourage complicate and delay the determination of these debate (Khalid et al., 2020). The arrive securing prepare for improvement ventures in Pakistan is another region where debasement plays a noteworthy part. The authorities capable for procuring arrive for framework ventures, lodging plans, or mechanical improvements regularly lock in in degenerate hones, such as underestimating arrive, colluding with engineers, or misappropriating remuneration reserves. These degenerate hones lead to debate over stipend, the lawfulness of acquisitions, and the reasonableness of resettlement plans, all of which habitually result in case. The involvement of debasement in these forms makes it troublesome for influenced people to secure reasonable treatment, driving to delayed and disagreeable legitimate fights (Pradya, 2023).

The far reaching recognition that the legitimate framework is degenerate and one-sided debilitates numerous people from looking for legitimate change for arrive debate. This lack of believe within the lawful prepare worsens the issue of arrive case, as those who do seek after legitimate activity regularly confront a long, expensive, and dubious handle. The disintegration of believe in legitimate teach too undermines endeavors to change the arrive organization framework and address the root causes of arrive debate (Rahman & Hossain, 2020). On the other hand, marginalized communities, counting the destitute, ethnic minorities, and ladies, are frequently excessively influenced by arrive snatching and debasement. These bunches regularly need the money related assets, social associations, and legitimate information required to explore the complex and degenerate arrive organization framework. As a result, they are more likely to experience arrive dispossession and are less likely to realize favorable results in arrive case (Shafi et al., 2022).

The endeavors to move forward arrive organization, actualize arrive changes, or regularize casual settlements are frequently undermined by the dug in control of arrive mafias and degenerate authorities. These performing artists have a vested intrigued in keeping up the status quo, as they profit from the current framework of arrive organization and the legitimate ambiguities it makes. Tending to the affect of arrive mafias and debasement on arrive case will require comprehensive changes that target both the legitimate and regulatory measurements of arrive administration (Khalid et al., 2020). The exercises of arrive mafias and the pervasive corruption inside Pakistan's arrive organization framework are key drivers of arrive case within the nation. These components make critical challenges for people looking for to secure their arrive rights, driving to complex, drawn out, and regularly disagreeable lawful fights (Ullah et al., 2020).

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology, which is well-suited to exploring complex social phenomena like the influence of land mafias and corruption on land litigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through qualitative inquiry, the study aims to capture the nuanced experiences and perceptions of stakeholders engaged in land-related legal conflicts. To collect rich, contextual data, structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with purposefully selected respondents (Patton, 2015). The target participants included Additional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, Tehsildars, Naib Tehsildars, Patwaris, and lawyers, all of whom have direct involvement in land administration or litigation and possess relevant knowledge regarding how land mafias and corruption operate within the system (Palinkas et al., 2015).

After the completion of data collection, the responses were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, a widely used method in qualitative research for identifying, sorting, and naming

recurring themes from textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process allowed the researcher to uncover patterns related to how land mafias exploit bureaucratic weaknesses and how corruption within government departments escalates disputes into prolonged litigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). To enhance the reliability of findings, triangulation was used by comparing responses from different types of officials to validate recurring themes and observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). After the themes were developed, follow-up discussions were held, during which the respondents were invited to propose practical solutions aimed at curbing land litigation emerging from these corrupt and criminal networks.

Finally, the policy suggestions and strategic interventions proposed by respondents were compiled and synthesized. These recommendations aim to assist government policymakers, legal reform bodies, and anti-corruption agencies in crafting effective strategies to address land mafia operations and systemic corruption (World Bank, 2020). The final report will be shared with relevant departments, including the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Board of Revenue, and anti-corruption institutions, to help formalize evidence-based policies that could lead to more transparent land governance and a reduction in land-related litigation in Pakistan (UN-Habitat, 2021). The study thereby bridges the gap between grassroots-level insights and top-level decision-making to promote justice and administrative accountability in the land sector.

4. Results & Analysis

4.1. Demographics and Socio-Economics Characteristics of the Respondents: -

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

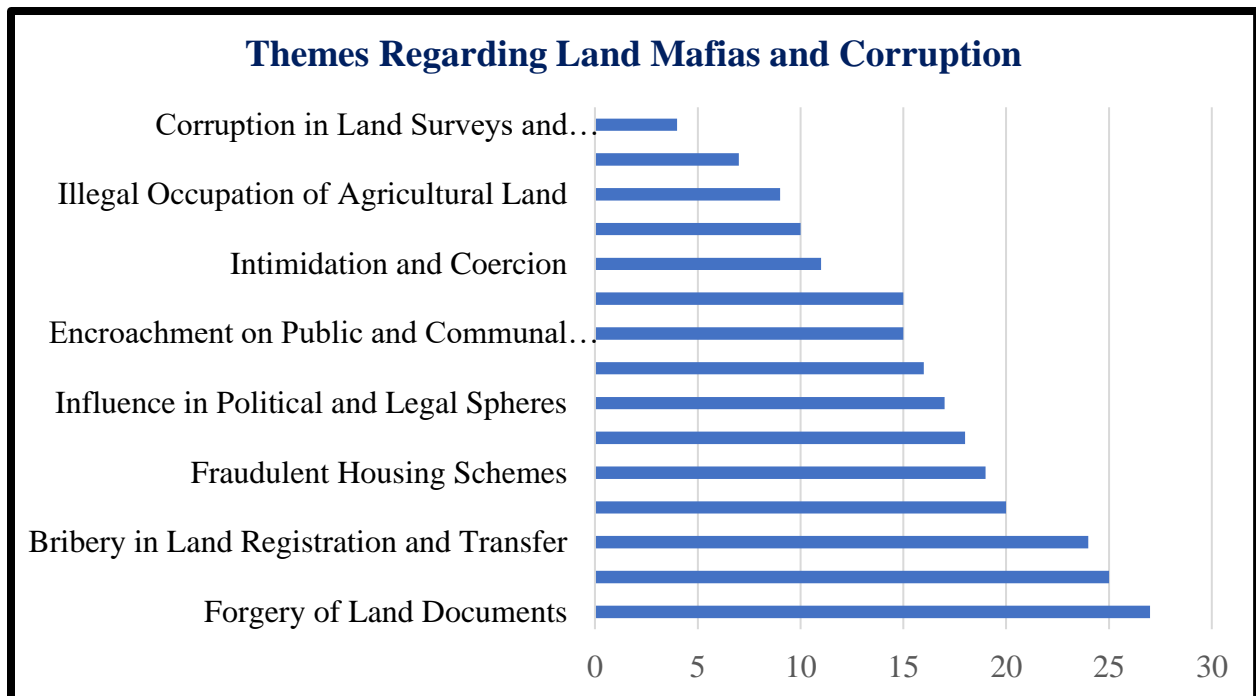
Demographics	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	38	88	88
	Female	5	12	12
	Total	43	100	
Age	18-25	4	9	9
	26-35	12	28	37
	36-45	20	47	84
	46-55	5	12	95
	Above 55	2	5	100
	Total	43	100	
Designation	Additional Commissioner	2	5	5
	Deputy Commissioner	2	5	9
	Assistant Commissioner	5	12	16
	Tehsildar	10	23	35
	Naib Tehsildar	10	23	47
	Patwari	10	23	47
	Lawyers	4	9	100
	TOTAL	43	100	
Qualification	Matriculation	5	12	12

	Intermediate	7	16	28
	Graduation	9	21	49
	Master	14	33	81
	MPhil. or above	8	19	100
	TOTAL	43	100	
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
	TOTAL	43	100	

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

The details regarding various themes pertaining to Land Mafias & Corruption and way forward to counter these problems have been given as under.

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



4.2.1. Forgery of Land Documents: -

Imitation of arrive records can altogether fuel arrive case by making untrue claims and debate over possession. To counter this issue, it is fundamental to fortify record confirmation forms and improve security highlights in arrive records. Actualizing computerized arrive registries with scrambled information and get to controls can offer assistance avoid unauthorized changes. Standard reviews and legitimate punishments for fraud can prevent false exercises. Moreover, teaching landowners and authorities around the significance of securing and confirming arrive reports can decrease the event of fraud and related case. By guaranteeing the judgment of arrive documentation, the hazard of debate and case can be minimized.

4.2.2. Organized Land Grabbing: -

Organized arrive snatching frequently leads to arrive case as facilitated endeavors to illicitly seize arrive make clashes over proprietorship and utilize. To counter this issue, it is pivotal to execute and uphold strong lawful systems that secure arrive rights and anticipate illegal securing. Fortifying arrives residency frameworks and expanding straightforwardness in arrive exchanges can offer assistance hinder organized arrive getting. Also, enabling neighborhood specialists and communities to report and address unlawful arrive seizures can help in quick mediation and determination. Giving instruction and back for defenseless communities can to offer assistance them protect their arrive rights and decrease the probability of case emerging from organized arrive getting.

4.2.3. Bribery in Land Registration and Transfer: -

Bribery in arrive enrollment and exchange forms can lead to noteworthy arrive case by undermining the astuteness of property exchanges and making debate over proprietorship. To counter this issue, it is vital to execute strict anti-corruption measures and uphold straightforwardness in all arrive enlistment and exchange strategies. Setting up clear, responsible forms for arrive exchanges, at the side strong examining and checking frameworks, can offer

assistance identify and anticipate bribery. Furthermore, advancing a culture of judgment through preparing for authorities and giving mysterious detailing components for untrustworthy hones can encourage decrease the frequency of bribery and the coming about arrive debate.

4.2.4. Collusion with Government Officials: -

Collaboration with government authorities can worsen arrive case by encouraging unlawful arrive bargains and making debate over property rights. To counter this issue, it is basic to implement strict anti-corruption laws and build up free oversight bodies to screen arrive exchanges and government hones. Executing straightforward methods for arrive procurement and enrollment, together with thorough reviews, can offer assistance identify and anticipate conniving. Empowering whistleblowing and giving assurances for those who report unscrupulous conduct can moreover offer assistance uncover and address degenerate hones. By advancing responsibility and straightforwardness, the hazard of case emerging from conniving with government authorities can be essentially decreased.

4.2.5. Fraudulent Housing Schemes: -

False lodging plans can lead to arrive case by deluding buyers and making debate over property possession and improvement. To counter this issue, it is significant to implement rigid directions and oversight for lodging engineers and genuine bequest operators. Building up a solid certification framework for lodging ventures and requiring clear, unquestionable documentation of possession and improvement plans can offer assistance avoid extortion. Furthermore, teaching the open almost common signs of false plans and empowering due perseverance some time recently obtaining property can ensure buyers. Giving legitimate response and back for casualties of false plans can too offer assistance resolve debate and prevent future extortion.

4.2.6. Creation of Fake Land Titles: -

The creation of fake arrive titles can lead to arrive case by creating debate over veritable possession and rights. To address this issue, it is basic to upgrade the security and confirmation forms for arrive titles. Actualizing progressed innovations such as blockchain for recording and following arrive possession can give a secure, tamper-proof framework. Normal reviews and strict punishments for false exercises can discourage the creation of fake titles. Also, teaching landowners and authorities around the significance of confirming titles and utilizing secure enrollment strategies can offer assistance avoid debate and guarantee the judgment of arrive exchanges.

4.2.7. Influence in Political and Legal Spheres: -

Impact in political and lawful circles can worsen arrive case by skewing lawful forms and property debate in support of effective people or substances. To counter this issue, it is basic to advance straightforwardness and responsibility in both political and lawful education. Reinforcing the autonomy of the legal and guaranteeing that lawful choices are based exclusively on justification and prove can offer assistance to relieve the effect of undue impact. Actualizing strict anti-corruption measures and giving assurances to whistle-blowers can also address manhandling of control. By cultivating an evenhanded lawful environment and diminishing openings for impact to skew arrive debate, the probability of a case can be essentially diminished.

4.2.8. Blocking of Land Reforms: -

Blocking of arrive changes can propagate arrive case by keeping up obsolete hones and falling flat to address systemic issues in arrive administration. To counter this issue, it is pivotal to advocate for and execute comprehensive arrive change approaches that address the root causes of arrive debate. This incorporates modernizing arrive records, guaranteeing reasonable conveyance of

arrive, and disentangling legitimate forms. Locks in partners, counting influenced communities and policymakers, within the change prepare can construct agreement and bolster for fundamental changes. Furthermore, promoting transparency and responsibility within the usage of changes can offer assistance overcome resistance and diminish the frequency of land-related case.

4.2.9. Encroachment on Public and Communal Land: -

Infringement on open and communal arrive frequently leads to arrive case by making debate over arrive possession and utilize. To counter this issue, it is basic to implement exacting controls and checking frameworks that ensure open and communal lands from unauthorized infringement. Actualizing clear arrival outlines and conducting customary reviews can offer assistance in anticipating unlawful occupation. Moreover, giving legitimate back and clear strategies for tending to infringements can guarantee that debates are settled proficiently. Teaching communities almost the significance of regarding arrive boundaries and including neighborhood specialists in overseeing and securing open lands can decrease the probability of causes related to infringement.

4.2.10. Manipulation of Legal System: -

Control of the legitimate framework can compound arrive case by skewing lawful results and undermining reasonable settling of property debate. To counter this issue, it is fundamental to upgrade the straightforwardness and responsibility of legitimate forms. Fortifying legal oversight, guaranteeing thorough authorization of lawful guidelines, and giving preparing for lawful experts on moral hones can offer assistance avoid control. Executing autonomous survey instruments and advancing open mindfulness of lawful rights and methods can to ensure against mishandle of the framework. By cultivating a vigorous and fair-minded lawful system, the potential for case stemming from manipulative hones can be essentially diminished.

4.2.11. Intimidation and Coercion: -

Terrorizing and constraint can raise arrive case by constraining people into ominous understandings or discouraging them from attesting their arrive rights. To counter this issue, it is significant to reinforce lawful securities for people confronting dangers and guarantee that such conduct is expeditiously tended to by specialists. Actualizing measures like secret announcing frameworks, giving legitimate help and back to casualties, and indicting those who lock in in terrorizing or constraint can offer assistance secure landowners. Moreover, raising mindfulness around legitimate rights and creating a steady environment for people to challenge unjustifiable hones can offer assistance decrease the effect of terrorizing and constraint on arrive debate.

4.2.12. Illegal Land Subdivision: -

Unlawful arrive subdivision frequently leads to arrive case by making debate over property boundaries, proprietorship, and arrive utilize. To counter this issue, it is significant to uphold strict controls and oversight for arrive subdivision exercises. Executing comprehensive arrive utilize and zoning laws, together with a strong observing framework, can offer assistance anticipate unauthorized subdivisions. Guaranteeing that all subdivision ventures get fundamental endorsements and follow to legitimate measures can moreover moderate debate. Moreover, teaching landowners and designers approximately lawful necessities and giving clear channels for announcing unlawful exercises can assist decrease the rate of case related to unauthorized arrive subdivisions.

4.2.13. Illegal Occupation of Agricultural Land: -

Unlawful occupation of agrarian arrive can lead to critical arrive case by making clashes over legitimate arrive utilize and proprietorship. To counter this issue, it is fundamental to uphold

exacting land-use controls and routinely screen agrarian lands to avoid unauthorized occupations. Actualizing clear, available announcing components for illicit occupations and taking quick legitimate activity against violators can hinder such exercises. Moreover, teaching landowners and rural communities approximately their rights and duties, at the side advancing straightforward arrive administration hones, can offer assistance secure agrarian arrive from illicit occupation and decrease related case.

4.2.14. Eviction of Legitimate Owners: -

Removal of true-blue landowners can lead to arriving cases by disturbing legitimate possession and causing debate over property rights. To counter this issue, it is pivotal to execute and implement thorough lawful assurances for property proprietors, guaranteeing that removals are conducted as they were through legal and straightforward forms. Building up clear, available channels for proprietors to challenge wrongful removals and giving legitimate bolster to those influenced can offer assistance resolve debate successfully. Furthermore, reinforcing property rights documentation and enlistment frameworks can avoid unauthorized removals and secure genuine proprietors, subsequently lessening the probability of a case.

4.2.15. Corruption in Land Surveys and Demarcations: -

Debasement in arrival studies and outlines can lead to arrival cases by creating wrong or one-sided arrival boundaries and proprietorship records. To counter this issue, it is basic to actualize strict oversight and reviewing instruments to arrive at overview forms. Utilizing progressed innovations, such as GIS and partisan symbolism, can upgrade exactness and straightforwardness in boundaries. Furthermore, building up clear conventions for announcing and tending to degenerate hones, in conjunction with preparing and authorizing surveyors to maintain moral measures, can offer assistance in anticipating debasement. Guaranteeing that arrival overviews are conducted autonomously and surveyed altogether can moderate the chance of cases emerging from false or wrong arrival divisions.

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