

(Translated from Arabic)

I. Regarding the request to provide additional information and comments on the allegations

The information provided in the claim is inaccurate for the following reasons:

(a) The Government of Saudi Arabia is developing certain residential districts in order to reduce the socioeconomic and security risks posed by those areas. It has allocated substantial levels of funding to these projects. Neighbourhoods in various cities, such as in Riyadh, Mecca and Jeddah, have recently undergone development. Work is currently under way to develop Al-Masoura neighbourhood in Awamia district, Al Qatif.

(b) Al-Masoura is a residential neighbourhood of old, small, contiguous houses, all structurally unsound, some already in ruins and many derelict or on the verge of collapse. Terrorist groups use these buildings as a base from which to run their activities and criminals have been known to commit murders and hold civilians and religious leaders there, such as [REDACTED]. Armed robberies, drug dealing and arms smuggling also occur in the area. These activities pose a threat to local residents and to the area as a whole, as the neighbourhood is situated at the heart of the town. Furthermore, the area lacks many facilities and services; among other things, the alleyways are too narrow to allow the passage of ambulances and fire engines.

(c) The provincial authorities proposed that the neighbourhood be developed and conducted a comprehensive study to that end, also taking account the need to protect the resident population by compensating property owners. Plans were drawn up with the aim of providing the area with many essential services, opening up the streets to allow access roads to be built and demolishing the buildings on the verge of collapse.

(d) In accordance with the Eminent Domain and Temporary Expropriation of Property Act promulgated by Royal Decree No. M/15 of 11 Rabi' I A.H. 1424 (12 May A.D. 2003), approval was granted to start the process of expropriating certain properties with a view to developing Al-Masoura and the decision was announced in the Official Gazette and in local daily newspapers. Notifications were also sent to the properties concerned and to the headquarters of the provincial authorities and the municipal council. The notifications instructed property owners to submit their ownership documents to the municipal council and to direct any enquiries to the assessment and valuation committees in accordance with the aforementioned Act.

(e) Assessment committees were established to draw up inventories of the properties concerned and all associated buildings and items, which were then signed by the owners. The properties were subsequently valued by the valuation committee provided for in article 7 of the Eminent Domain and Temporary Expropriation of Property Act. In accordance with the Act, the committee was made up of representatives of the Ministries of the Interior, of Municipal and Rural Affairs, of Justice and of Finance and the company in charge of the project, in addition to two local representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, both of whom were members of the Saudi Authority for Accredited Valuers. The committees used rigorous assessment and valuation procedures that encompassed all relevant aspects. The value per square metre of residential real estate was set at approximately 4,500 Saudi Arabian riyals (SRI) and the value of commercial real estate varied between SRI 8,000 and SRI 9,000 per square metre. The property owners accepted the results of the assessments and valuations and the cheques for the compensation owed were issued long before work to develop the area began.

(f) The owners were issued with the eviction notification in a clear and appropriate manner before the eviction deadline. According to article 17 of the Eminent Domain and Temporary Expropriation of Property Act, the project manager has to give owners and occupiers at least 30 days to vacate the property, as of the date on which they receive the eviction notification, on condition that the compensation is paid before that date.



(g) According to article 18 of the Basic Law of Governance, the State must protect the freedom to own property and the inviolability of property. In addition, private property cannot be expropriated except where it is in the public interest to do so, in which case the owner must be compensated fairly. The Eminent Domain and Temporary Expropriation of Property Act contains the provisions necessary to ensure that these guarantees are upheld.

(h) A number of remedies are available to owners seeking redress. In that connection, article 24 of the Eminent Domain and Temporary Expropriation of Property Act reads: "Stakeholders may appeal to the Board of Grievances against any decision taken by the committees or administrative authorities pursuant to this law within 60 days of receiving notification of the decision."

Thus, the steps taken to expropriate the properties with a view to developing the neighbourhood were compliant with the provisions of article 18 of the Basic Law of Governance and with the Eminent Domain and Temporary Expropriation of Property Act, which guarantee payment of fair compensation. Moreover, all payments are to be completed before owners and occupants can be evicted, 30 days' notice of eviction must be given and no deadline may be set for the consideration of issues related to the provision of alternative housing. Owners have the right to contest decisions made by the committees and the administrative authorities before the Board of Grievances (the administrative judiciary), the rulings issued by which are final and binding.

II. Regarding the request to explain the reasons for the planned demolition of the neighbourhood of Al-Masoura, which poses a threat to sites of historical, architectural and cultural significance and cultural heritage and which will result in the forced eviction of thousands of individuals, including children and older persons

As stated in the response to the first request for clarification, eviction notifications were issued to property owners at least 30 days before the eviction date and no deadline has been set for the consideration of issues related to the provision of alternative housing. In addition, the payment procedures for compensation were completed before the eviction date and in sufficient time to allow the occupants to find suitable alternative accommodation.

III. Regarding the request to explain how the decisions taken comply with the Saudi Monuments, Museums and Architectural Heritage Act of November 2014 and with the international human rights standards for the preservation of cultural heritage referred to in the communication

Al-Masoura district does not contain any historical sites. The decisions taken concerning its development are therefore compliant with the law, including the Monuments, Museums and Architectural Heritage Act, and with the cited international human rights standards.

IV. Regarding the request to indicate whether and how the individuals concerned have been consulted about the plans that will result in the described demolitions and evictions; provide information about any assistance that has been offered to ensure adequate alternative places for them to live; indicate whether adequate compensation for the loss of home and property has been put in place for all residents; and provide information concerning all measures taken to ensure that no residents will be made homeless as a consequence of the demolitions

The local municipal council — of which half the members are elected by the local populace — always plays a role in neighbourhood development plans such as these. The municipal authorities for Al-Masoura were the first to suggest that the area should be developed. They conducted a comprehensive survey that identified no potential risks posed to the residents by the project, given that sufficient compensation would be paid to them to ensure that they would be able to find alternative accommodation. The project was approved with the aim of providing the neighbourhood with the many essential services that it was lacking, opening up the streets to allow access roads to be built and demolishing buildings that were on the verge of collapse.

Decisions such as these are taken only after experts from the relevant entities have conducted a thorough study that takes into account the public and private interest, as

described in the responses to the first and second requests for clarification. In this case, once approval had been granted to start the process of expropriating the properties for the purpose of developing the district, the decision was announced in the Official Gazette and in local daily newspapers. Notifications were also sent to the properties concerned and to the headquarters of the provincial authorities and the municipal council. The notifications instructed property owners to submit their ownership documents to the municipal council and to direct any enquiries to the assessment and valuation committees, in accordance with the Eminent Domain and Temporary Expropriation of Property Act.

Information was provided in the responses to the first and second requests for information concerning the assistance offered to ensure that adequate places in which to live were found for the residents of the neighbourhood and that no one was made homeless. Eviction notifications were issued to property owners at least 30 days before the eviction date and no deadline has been set for the consideration of issues related to the provision of alternative housing. In addition, the payment procedures for compensation were completed before the eviction date and in sufficient time to allow the occupants to find suitable alternative accommodation.

Information was provided in the response to the first request for information concerning the provision of adequate compensation for the loss of home and property. The committees used rigorous assessment and valuation procedures that encompassed all relevant aspects. The value per square metre of residential real estate was set at approximately SR1 4,500 and the value of commercial real estate varied between SR1 8,000 and SR1 9,000 per square metre. The property owners accepted the results of the assessments and valuations and the cheques for the compensation owed were issued long before work to develop the area began.

V. Regarding the request to indicate what resettlement programmes have been considered should the involuntary resettlements occur, whether these have been developed in conjunction with the individuals affected and how they will protect the individuals concerned from being made more vulnerable

Information was provided on this matter in the responses to the first and second requests for information. The reason for developing the neighbourhood is to improve the area and provide facilities and services to meet the needs of the community and the demands of residents. The objective is also to develop the area into a local tourist attraction and to help turn Awamia into an outward-looking town capable of interacting with the outside world on a social, cultural and developmental level. The project will also help to drive economic development through the creation of markets and investment opportunities. To that end, a number of facilities will be built, including a public market, commercial premises with a traditional character, an archaeological area, a cultural centre, a public library, a sports centre, cafés and restaurants, male and female event spaces, a mall, office buildings, a women's club and a kindergarten. These developments will help create jobs and, consequently, improve the living standards of the population of Awamia and of the province as a whole.

VI. Regarding the request to indicate what procedures are in place to ensure that adequate notice is provided prior to any forced removals and that legal aid is made available to assist residents and business owners should they wish to challenge the decisions

Please refer to the information provided in response to the first and second requests for clarification.

VII. Regarding the request to indicate what administrative and judicial measures are in place, at both national and municipal level, to ensure access to remedies and the accountability of various actors in order to enable individuals and groups to claim their right to adequate housing

Saudi Arabia places great importance on the provision of adequate housing for residents. Government funding is available to enable residents to access adequate housing and the Government has launched a number of projects and initiatives to that end; for example, it provides support to housing projects and has earmarked funds for loans for the

construction of residential units. Additional capital has been paid into the Real Estate Development Fund and the maximum housing loan available from the fund has been increased from SRI 300,000 to SRI 500,000. Furthermore, numerous civil society organizations provide housing to persons in need throughout the country, such as the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Foundation for Development Housing Dedicated to His Parents, the Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Foundation and the King Salman Charity Housing Association.

As regards administrative and judicial remedies, under article 47 the Basic Law of Governance, citizens and residents have equal rights of recourse to law and to effective domestic remedies. Additionally, all procedures are completed within a reasonable time frame. Claimants may have recourse to various remedies in Saudi Arabia, such as:

- The “majlis” (audience chamber) of the King and of the Crown Prince;
 - The provincial governors: in accordance with paragraph (c) of article 7 of the Regions Act, the provincial governors are responsible for protecting the individual rights and freedoms of all residents and must desist from any act that compromises those rights or freedoms, except where allowed by the law;
 - The judicial authorities, including the sharia courts and the Board of Grievances;
 - The Control and Investigation Board;
 - Related government departments;
 - Governmental and non-governmental human rights organizations.
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