

## **Assessment of National Land Destruction in Iran, a Case Study: Zavat of Chalus in Mazandaran-Iran, from 2000 to 2010**

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**Abstract:** This study was investigated the seizure and destruction of national land. The Zavats region of Klarstaq natural resources Basin of Chalus city was investigated during 2000 to 2010. The results showed that 55973 square meters of national land were seized during the decade 2000 to 2010 and approximately 1.4 percent of those seizures were located in areas under the jurisdiction of the Department of Noshahr Natural Resources and nearly 10.1 percent of the seizures were located in areas under the jurisdiction of the Department of Klarstaq Natural Resources. Most of the seizures were in 2000 (a rate of 17720 square meters) and 2004 (13500 square meters). Seizures frequently occurred around roads, gas canals and water canals through national lands. Analysis of results from interviews of local people indicated that unemployment, poverty, water channels crossing the area, a lack of legal experts and an increasing price of land all contributed to land seizure and the destruction of national land. The assistance of volunteers working with the Natural Resources officials hasn't managed to reduce occurrences of land seizure. But specialist judges in courts and the use of forest guards could be a positive step toward a reduction of this problem of land seizures of national territory. The research was done from library research and surveys.

**Key words:** Iran • National resources • Land • Seizure • Zavats

### **INTRODUCTION**

Seizure and destruction of national land occurs when there are no law or enforcement agencies such as organizations of national resource protection or that they are ineffective. However, the result is that people are in despair at the lack of effective law enforcement [1]. One of the methods of seizure and destruction is the conversion of national land whereby. Two steps are taken; firstly an offender first converts national forest land for agricultural use and at a later stage it is converted to a residential area. This study aims to investigate the land seizure of national lands in the Zavats region of Klarstaq natural resources Basin of Chalus city in Mazandaran province over a 10-year period [2].

So far various researches have been done on the seizure and destruction of national land in various countries of world. Friis and Reenberg [3] investigated

seizure of agricultural land in Africa by international investors; the study traced land transactions throughout Africa. Results showed that the areas of lost land were sometimes as large as 51-63 million hectares or a region equivalent to the land area of the whole of France. Some of these land transactions occurred in East African countries such as Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda and Madagascar. Land transactions also occurred in other large countries such as Sudan, Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

More than 5 percent of transactional land in the reviewed countries was agricultural. This percentage was over 14 percent in Uganda and more than 21 percent in Mozambique and more than 48 percent in Congo. The consequences and impact of these transactions were reportedly an intensification of agriculture, deforestation, the migration of indigenous people, increasing food insecurity, poverty for the local people and deprivation

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of the environment. Omole [4] studied seizure and destruction of land use in Nigeria. Who concluded that factors such as the rental cost of land both domestic and commercial, an increasing population and the development of overcrowded slums and the construction of sewer pipeline, the laying of water pipelines and electrical cables has a great impact on land seizure and its destruction.

The purpose of this study was to identify those areas of land to have undergone seizure, to evaluate the resulting level of the destruction of national land, to identify causes and motives behind national land destruction and investigate appropriate response strategies for judicial and trustee organizations that surround the issue. These subjects can be considered for government policy on the macro level and can play a valuable role in the protection of the environment and national land that belongs to society as a whole for the benefit of the people within a community.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

**Geographical Position of Study Area:** The case study area was the Zavatt region of Klarstaq natural resources Basin of Chalus city in Mazandaran province. The Zavatt region ranges from Poshtemazoo near Synva to Chakhani near the Telecabin at Namakabroud. The area has been located in 36° to 38 ° geographic longitude and 51°, 19' to 51°, 24' geographic latitudes. The area covers a region of about 1000 hectares. The region includes six villages which support 1170 households and 4778 census in 2006 [5].

**Research Method:** The research has been done using library resources and from surveys. Data analysis was done using SPSS software. The basic information about land seizure and identification of the destroyed regions was collected according to the thematic laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Then data from the seized land was recorded by field operations and objective observations. Field operations and objective observations showed that most of the seized land was converted for agricultural use or citrus gardens.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the investigations of land seizures in the Zavatt region are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Seizure and destruction of national lands in Zavatt region from 2000 to 2010 (reference: research results)

Row	Seizure year	Number of Seizures	Area (square meter)
1	2000	2	3090
2	2001	2	1663
3	2002	1	1500
4	2003	3	4350
5	2004	7	13500
6	2005	2	2990
7	2006	3	3300
8	2007	3	5000
9	2008	2	1800
10	2009	4	6500

Table 2: Seizures to national lands in affiliated cities of Natural Resources Office of Mazandaran (Noshahr), from 2000 to 2010 (reference: research results)

Row	city	Seizures to national lands (according to material 690 of Islamic law of Iran) (hectare)
1	Noshahr- Royan	8251/157
2	Chalus	4651/129
3	Klardasht	1432/65
4	Abbasabad	5112/32
5	Tonekabon	9561/48
6	Ramsar	4178/22
7	Total	3185/456

According to Table 3, there were 29 cases of violation of national land in the study area from 2000 to 2010 which amounted to an area of 55,973 square meters. Totally, of 11 cases were investigated in the judicial courts and reached to verdicts which in most cases took one year or less. The minimum and maximum levels of land seizure were 516 square meters and 5238 square meters respectively and their average was 1930 square meters [6]. While the commander for the Protection unit of Forest Rangeland and Watershed Organization of Iran has stated that most violations and crimes against Iran's natural resources were related to land seizure and the destruction of national land [7].

Statistics that cover a 10-year period of land seizure and the destruction of national land in the Zavatt region with seizure and destruction in the national lands of Klarstaq natural resources, Chalus natural resources and Noshahr natural resources office show that the extent of land seizure in Zavatt compared with each mentioned region was 10.1, 5.4 and 1.4 percent respectively (Table 4).

Table 3: characteristics of investigated infringement cases from 2000 to 2010

year	Area of seizing land (square meter)	Expertise estimation of losses (Rial)	Year of verdict export	Judge time	Infringement type	Verdict type	Punishment rate
2000	2000	860800	2000	-	seizure	punishment remove	-
	1090	499136	-	-	seizure	-	-
2001	1120	8368000	-	-	Seizure and tree cutting	-	-
	516	819200	This land piece was seized in 2000 and after seizure remove in 2001, was seized again in 2001				
2002	1500	2856000	2004	2	Seizure and tree cutting	seizure remove	Money punishment
2003	1000	20000000	2004	1	Seizure and tree cutting	seizure remove	Money punishment
	850	17000000	2004	1	Seizure and tree cutting	seizure remove	jail
	2500	90000000	This land piece was removed of seizure in 2003, 2004 and 2006 but it is in violators Seizure yet				
2004	3000	60000000	2004	-	Seizure and tree cutting	punishment remove	-
	600	12000000	-	-	seizure	-	-
	2400	48000000	-	-	seizure	-	-
	2000	-	-	-	seizure	-	-
	2500	50000000	-	-	seizure	-	-
	600	-	-	-	seizure	-	-
	2400	-	-	-	seizure	-	-
2005	650	474000	-	-	Seizure and tree cutting	-	-
	2340	1706399	-	-	seizure	-	-
2006	1300	2283251	-	-	Seizure and destruction	-	-
	800	1404800	-	-	Seizure and destruction	-	-
	1200	2107200	-	-	Seizure and destruction	-	-
2007	2500	4390000	2010	3	seizure	seizure remove	Money punishment
	1000	1756000	-	-	Seizure and destruction	-	-
	1500	2634000	-	-	Seizure and tree cutting	-	-
2008	900	1580400	2010	2	Seizure and tree cutting	seizure remove	Money punishment
	1100	1931600	2009	1	Seizure and tree cutting	seizure remove	Money punishment
2009	840	1475040	2010	1	seizure	seizure remove	Money punishment
	2200	3863200	2010	1	Seizure and destruction	seizure remove	Money punishment
	2500	4390000	2010	-	Ruling has been the punishment remove of violator but file is being because of complain the natural resources		
	960	1685760	-	-	Seizure	-	-
total	43866						

Table 4: seizure and destruction of national lands in Zavaf region and comparison with other regions in Natural Resources office of Mazandaran (Noshahr)

Characteristic	Region name			
	Zavat	Klarstaq natural resources	Chalus natural resources	Noshahr natural resources office
Seizure area (hectare)	5/5	3/54	6/101	9/390
Relation of Zavaf seizure to region (percent)	-	1/10	4/5	4/1

According to objectives of this study and observations taken, it can be concluded that construction projects or more specifically the gas pipeline crossing of the Poshtemazoo and Tajankola regions was one of the most significant factors that determined land seizure because it provided easier access to forest lands. Evident by the high percentage of land seizure occurrences, about 62 percent on both sides of the gas conduit road.

Passing water channel through the national lands is another effective factor on increasing seizures in the West of the study area which is in the Chakhani region. 9 cases of total violations were recorded in this area which amounts to 31 percent of all recorded land seizures.

Investigation of a profile of these violators showed that 41 percent were workers, 18.5 percent were farmers and 15 percent were employees. Statistics have identified

74.5 percent of the violators as being from the low-income strata of society and this confirms the results of interviewees who stressed that causes such as unemployment and lack of financial means has contributed to seizures of national territory. Omole [4] also concluded that factors such as rental cost of domestic and commercial land, increasing population and the development of overcrowded slums and the construction of a sewer pipeline, Water pipelines and electrical cables have great impacts on land seizure and the destruction of land.

Results of this study indicate that uneducated and low-educated people have typically been responsible for infringements of the laws to protect national land. So that 37 percent of the violators were uneducated and 26 percent of the violators only had minimum education and this social class formed 63 percent of the violations.

Results also showed that the level of education of the figures of the authorities of effective at reducing infringements. Because of the Klarstaq Natural Resources there was only 4990 square meters of land seized during the tenure of officials with and education higher than a diploma degree.

It can be concluded from these results that the investigation process relating to violations of natural resources such as land grab of national land in judicial courts is very slow: 15 cases out of 29 recorded violations in the study area had not yet been issued with a ruling.

With consideration of these results the following recommendations can be made:

- Creation of a protective green belt of needle leaf species to form a buffer between National Land and privately owned land and the restoration of prior protection belt in Poshtemazoo and Tajankola regions to avoid seizures of national land by the residents.
- Creation of high-income job opportunities for unemployed people in the region.
- Access of uneducated and low-educated residents to literacy and education programs.
- To employ managers with high expertise and education in the natural resource office of the region and to apply human resources to enforce protection that should be motivated by the payment of benefits in consideration of the difficulties incurred as a these workers are in direct conflict with the violators. To use of expert judges to issue proper rulings and verdicts for the better conservation of national land in the study area.

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