



**Pakistan Civil Society Forum (PCSF)**

پاکستان سول سوسائٹی فورم



LAHORE  
CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY

## **PRESS RELEASE**

The Government of the Punjab has informed the press that UNESCO has endorsed the Punjab government's stance over passing of Orange Line Metro Train near heritage buildings in Lahore and that international experts have agreed that Orange Line Metro Train project will not affect the heritage of Lahore.

The World Heritage Committee amended its Draft Decision 2017 on Shalamar Gardens and the Orange Line Project during the 41<sup>st</sup> World Heritage Committee session on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2017 and decided to give the Pakistan State Party one more year to comply with the Decisions of the WHC 2016. i.e to invite the Reactive Monitoring Mission and to submit studies pertaining to the Shalamar Gardens and the impact of the Orange Line Metro Train Project, prior to deciding whether to place the Fort and Shalamar Gardens UNESCO World Heritage Property on the WHS in Danger List. This was in response to the Pakistani State Party Delegations submission that they were legally bound to delay the Reactive Mission till the Supreme Court had given its ruling on the Orange Line. The Pakistani delegation also stated that the Supreme Court would deliver its verdict within 15 days after which the studies requested would be submitted and the Reactive Mission invited.

The Reactive Monitoring Mission is a statutory requirement of the World Heritage Convention (ratified by Pakistan in 1972) for which the Government of Pakistan has refused to issue visas to date.

The World Heritage Centre/UNESCO has clarified its position in a letters dated 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017 addressed to over 60 human and cultural rights organizations in Pakistan. The UNESCO letter by the Director of the World Heritage Centre, Mechtild Rossler, states that the Adopted Decision of the 40<sup>th</sup> session of Committee '**expressing its serious concern about the development of the Orange Line Metro... remains valid**'. The letter states '**It goes without saying that no work should be carried out within the section of the Shalamar Gardens until the Reactive Monitoring missions has been carried out and until the visual impact study has been submitted and reviewed by the (WHC) Advisory Bodies**' '**the committee requested the State Party to immediately undertake studies related to the setting of the Gardens which should be taken into account when proposing an enlargement of the property's buffer zone**'. '**I hope that this letter clarifies any misunderstanding the Decision 41 COM/&B.96 might give**'.

This is in no way an endorsement of the project by UNESCO, nor is it in any way a declaration by UNESCO that no damage will be caused to the heritage of Lahore as stated by Government representatives to the press. On the contrary it reminds Pakistan of its obligations to the convention and of its commitment to extend the protective 200' buffer zone where construction of the Orange Line is currently stayed by the Lahore High Court judgement. UNESCO retains its serious concern about damage to the Outstanding Universal Value of Shalamar by the Orange Line, and states that no construction should be permitted in the Shalamar Buffer zone prior to assessments made by UNESCO experts.

The Pakistan State Party delegation to UNESCO has lied about Pakistani law in a United Nations forum, and then misinformed the Pakistan Press about the decision and the intent of the UN.

- i. There is no law that requires the State Party to wait for the decision of the Supreme Court before inviting the Reactive Monitoring Mission to Pakistan. This is also not required as a matter of propriety since the Supreme Court is not deciding any question relating to the OUV of Shalamar but is focused purely on questions of Pakistan law.
- ii. There is no basis on which the State Party can make the statement that the decision of the Supreme Court may be released within the next 15 days as none of the parties to the litigation (including the State Party) can be aware of when the decision will be given.

The PCSF, LCS, Rasta Badlo and lawyers condemn the Government representatives including the Advocate General Punjab for deceiving the UN on behalf of the Pakistani people, and for misinforming the Pakistani people about the UNESCO verdict on the Orange Train in order to push through a Project regardless of the legal or ethical obligations of their office.