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Islamabad Cracks Down on Illegal Housing Along Drainage Channels

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Authorities in Islamabad have launched a major operation to demolish illegally constructed homes built on natural drainage channels and waterways. The move is part of a broader initiative to restore ecological flow, prevent flooding, and uphold urban planning regulations that have long been ignored in the city's fast-expanding peripheries. The Capital

Development Authority (CDA), backed by local administration and law enforcement, is leading the campaign.

Many of the targeted properties were built without proper permissions, violating both environmental and municipal laws. Over the years, these encroachments have narrowed or blocked natural water passages, contributing to seasonal flooding and infrastructure damage. The CDA stated that notices had been issued to the residents and developers involved, giving them time to vacate. “We are implementing court orders and existing laws,” a CDA spokesperson said, adding that the demolitions are necessary for the protection of lives and public property during the monsoon season.

This crackdown is not without controversy. While environmental and legal experts have supported the move, some affected residents have expressed frustration, claiming they were unaware of the illegal nature of the plots or were misled by unscrupulous developers. However, critics argue that for too long, authorities have turned a blind eye to unauthorised development in ecologically sensitive areas, often due to political pressures or weak enforcement. The current operation reflects a shift toward stricter governance and accountability in urban planning.

The cleanup effort in Islamabad could set a much-needed precedent for other urban centres across Pakistan, where illegal land use continues to undermine city resilience and environmental safety. As climate change increases the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, cities can no longer afford to allow flood channels to be obstructed by short-term construction gains. The enforcement of regulations in Islamabad is a welcome step in the right direction. The challenge now lies in ensuring that future planning decisions prioritise sustainability, and that those

responsible for unlawful developments face meaningful consequences. In doing so, Pakistan can take a critical step toward building safer, more resilient cities.

