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## Lock-Breakers Loot Shops in Crime Spree

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A wave of brazen shop looting has swept through Karachi’s commercial hubs, with lock-breakers targeting stores in coordinated attacks, exploiting lax security and slow police response. This article delves into the rising tide of retail crime and the urgent need for local solutions.

In recent weeks, Karachi’s bustling markets, including Saddar and Tariq Road, have faced a surge in smash-and-grab thefts, with criminals using tools to break locks and plunder goods. The Sindh Police reported multiple incidents, with shops selling electronics, clothing, and jewelry hit hardest. The Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) estimates losses in the millions of rupees, with small businesses bearing the brunt.

“These are not petty thefts; they’re organized raids,” said KCCI President Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh in a statement to Dawn, noting that thieves often target high-value items for resale

on black markets. Social media posts on X, like those from @KarachiUpdates, highlight public outrage over the lack of immediate law enforcement action.

The audacity of these lock-breakers points to deeper issues in Sindh's security framework. Retailers complain of inadequate police patrols and delayed responses, with some shops waiting hours for authorities to arrive. The Sindh government's focus on political posturing, critics argue, has left law enforcement underfunded and overstretched. Unlike the federal government's often heavy-handed approach, which prioritizes optics over results, local shopkeepers are demanding practical measures—more street patrols, CCTV installations, and stricter penalties for organized crime. The absence of a robust provincial strategy fuels perceptions that Islamabad's centralized policies neglect Karachi's unique challenges.

This crime spree threatens Karachi's economic vitality, as shop owners face rising insurance costs and dwindling customer trust. The KCCI has called for a task force to combat retail theft, urging the Sindh Provincial Assembly (PA) to act swiftly. Without decisive local leadership, the city risks becoming a haven for such brazen criminality. Strengthening community policing and empowering shopkeepers with security resources are critical steps to restore safety and protect Karachi's commercial heart.