



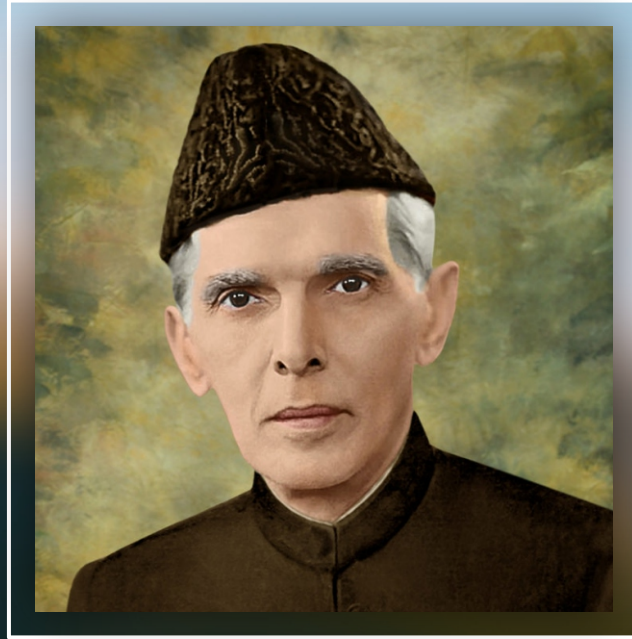
Exclusive Interview
GHULAM MOHAMMAD SAFI

CHAINS OF DISSENT

**LIFE SENTENCE OF ASIYA ANDRABI AND
THE EXPANDING ARCHITECTURE OF
INCARCERATION IN KASHMIR**



KASHMIR IS THE JUGULAR VEIN OF PAKISTAN



“Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan and no nation or country would tolerate its jugular vein remains under the sword of the enemy”.

QUAID-E-AZAM MUHAMMAD ALI JINNAH,
Pakistan’s First Governor General during his stay in Ziarat 1948

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ATROCITIES BY INDIAN TROOPS

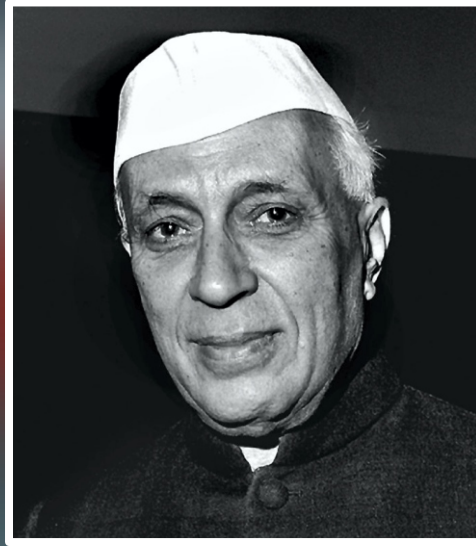
January 1989 to April 30, 2026

Total Killings*	96,495
Custodial Killings	7,418
Civilians Arrested	181,046
Structures Destroyed/Damaged	110,565
Women Widowed	22,991
Children Orphaned	108,007
Women Gangraped/Molested	11,277

** Including custodial killings*

Source: Kashmir Media Service (www.kmsnews.org)

REMINDER TO INDIA



"... where the State has not acceded to that Dominion whose majority community is the same as State's, the question whether State has finally acceded to one or other Dominion should be ascertained by reference to the will of people".

INDIAN PRIME MINISTER JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Telegram to Pakistan Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan November 8, 1947)



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KASHMIR INSIGHT

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IMPUNITY AND ILLUSION: THE DEADLY COVER OF AFSPA IN KASHMIR

The killing of a young Kashmiri, Rashid Mughal, in Ganderbal has reopened an old wound, one that never really heals in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The official version called it a 'successful operation'. His family says he was picked up and killed in cold blood. Between these two accounts sits a familiar, uncomfortable question. How many such encounters are real, and how many are stories that come ready-made?

At the heart of this uneasy debate lies the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. For decades, it has given sweeping powers to Indian troops in conflict zones. It allows them to shoot, search and detain on suspicion. But what truly sets it apart is the protection it offers. Without approval from New Delhi, no prosecution can move forward. In effect, accountability becomes a distant possibility rather than an immediate expectation.

Rashid Mughal's case feels painfully familiar to many in the Valley. A civilian with no known militant past is suddenly declared a militant. Weapons are shown as recovered. The family pushes back, pointing out inconsistencies that do not add up. An inquiry is announced. For a moment, it appears the system is responding. Then, as has happened before, the process slows, fades and disappears from public attention.

This is not new terrain. The Pathribal fake encounter and the Chattisingpora massacre still linger in public memory, not just for what happened but for how the truth struggled to emerge. The Machil fake encounter showed how civilians could be lured with promises and then killed to produce results. Even in recent years, cases like Shopian in 2020 have kept these fears alive. The pattern has not disappeared. It has simply adapted.

Over time, a script has taken shape. There is a killing. An official statement follows. Families reject it. Doubts surface. An investigation begins. And then, silence. It is this repetition that has done the real damage. People no longer react to a single incident.

They react to a history.

The cost of this goes far beyond statistics. For families, it is not just loss but a long struggle for recognition and truth. For society, it creates a quiet but constant fear. When the line between a civilian and a suspect becomes blurred, everyday life changes. Trust erodes, slowly but deeply

There is also a narrative battle playing out. Encounters are often used to signal control, to reinforce the idea that things are under order. But when those claims are repeatedly questioned, the narrative begins to crack. The dead, in these cases, risk becoming symbols in a story they never chose to be part of.

Groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have, over the years, pointed to the same concern.

When strong legal protections meet

weak accountability, the balance tilts. And when that happens, even legitimate actions come under doubt because the system itself lacks credibility.

Supporters of AFSPA argue that such powers are necessary in a place like Kashmir. There is truth in the idea that security challenges are complex. But laws designed for exceptional situations cannot become permanent shields. When oversight weakens, excess finds space.

What makes Kashmir particularly fragile is not just the conflict itself but the slow erosion of trust. Incidents like the killing of Rashid Mughal do not exist in isolation. They add to a long list of unresolved questions, each one making reconciliation harder than before.

If anything is to change, the cycle has to break. Not through routine inquiries that lead nowhere, but through processes that are transparent and credible. Accountability cannot remain conditional. It has to be visible.

Because in places like IIOJK, justice is not an abstract idea. It is the difference between memory and closure. And without it, peace will always feel distant, something spoken about more than truly lived.



CHAINS OF DISSENT

LIFE SENTENCE OF ASIYA ANDRABI AND THE EXPANDING ARCHITECTURE OF INCARCERATION IN KASHMIR

The sentencing of Asiya Andrabi to life imprisonment marks a defining moment in the contemporary political history of Kashmir. It goes far beyond a single courtroom verdict and reflects a broader pattern of criminalising dissent, silencing political voices and reshaping the contours of resistance in the region. Her case, layered with years of pre-trial detention, contested evidence and persistent allegations of rights violations, has reignited debate about justice in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and about the limits

Her journey from educator and activist to prisoner spans decades. She has been arrested multiple times under laws such as the draconian Public Safety Act, spending more than fifteen years in detention across different prisons. Her latest incarceration began in 2018 under the black law Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. After nearly eight years in custody without a concluded trial, a Delhi court sentenced her to life imprisonment in March 2026, alongside 30-year sentences for her associates Nahida Nasreen and Fehmeeda Sofi.



The charges against them, including conspiracy and waging war against India, have been widely contested. Observers have pointed out that much of the prosecution relied on speeches, affiliations and electronic communication rather than demonstrable acts of violence. This has raised a central question that lies at the heart of the case. When does political expression become criminal, and who determines that boundary?

The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act has become a defining instrument in India's

of state power under international law.

At 64, Andrabi is not merely a political figure but a symbol of a generation of Kashmiri women who stepped into public life during one of the most turbulent periods in the region's history. As the founder of Dukhtaran-e-Millat, a women-led socio-political organisation established in 1987, she sought to create space for female participation in a movement largely dominated by men. Initially focused on social welfare, including support for widows and orphans affected by conflict, the organisation gradually evolved into a political platform advocating the right to self-determination.

persecution of Kashmiris. Introduced in 1967 and expanded over time, it allows for prolonged detention, restricts bail and defines unlawful activity in broad terms that often encompass speech and association. New Delhi deems these provisions to be necessary to maintain order in the occupied territory. However, application of UAPA increasingly blurs the line between addressing security concerns and suppressing dissent.

In Andrabi's case, the length of pre-trial detention itself has drawn significant concern. Eight years without a final verdict raises questions about due process and the principle that justice must be timely

as well as fair. The eventual sentencing formalises a punishment that many argue had already been imposed through years of incarceration.

The implications extend beyond one individual. The use of such laws has created a chilling effect on political participation, particularly among women. The message is unmistakable. Engagement in political discourse, especially on questions of identity and self-determination, can come at a profound personal cost. Over time, this fear reshapes the public sphere, replacing participation with silence.

Kashmiri women have historically occupied a complex role within society and resistance movements. Figures such as Lal Ded and Habba Khatoon represent a long tradition of intellectual and cultural defiance. In the modern era, activists like Parveena Ahangar have brought global attention to

imprisonment acquire deeper meaning. Her case illustrates both the expanding role of women in Kashmir's political life and the risks that accompany that participation. It also underscores how female-led political expression is often met with heightened scrutiny and severe consequences.

The pattern of incarceration in Kashmir since 2019 reinforces the significance of this moment. Following the revocation of Article 370, detentions of political leaders, activists and civilians increased sharply. Among the most prominent cases is Yasin Malik, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2022. His transition from armed struggle to non-violent political engagement had once been viewed as a pathway towards dialogue, yet his sentencing was widely interpreted by supporters as a signal that even non-violent dissent would not be accommodated.

Among others who continue to languish in prisons



enforced disappearances through sustained advocacy.

At the same time, the conflict has imposed distinct and often devastating burdens on women. The phenomenon of half widows, referring to women whose husbands have disappeared without trace in Indian army custody, reflects the enduring uncertainty and trauma of life in conflict zone like Kashmir. Incidents such as the Kunan Poshpora have further highlighted the gendered dimensions of violence and impunity.

Within this wider landscape, Andrabi's activism and

are APHC chairman Masarrat Alam Bhat, Shabir Ahmad Shah, Nayeem Ahmad Khan, Ayaz Akbar, Pir Saifullah, Raja Merajudin Karwal, Shahidul Islam, Farooq Ahmad Dar, Mushtaqul Islam, Dr Hameed Fayaz, Dr Qasim Faktoo, Advocate Mian Abdul Qayoom, Dr Shafi Shariati, Molvi Bashir Irfani, Bilal Siddiqi, and Khurram Parvez, forming the core of a detained political leadership whose incarceration has stretched across years. Many of them have spent years in detention, often facing prolonged legal proceedings, health challenges and limited access to families.

The deaths in custody of Altaf Ahmad Shah, Ashraf Sehrai and Ghulam Muhammad Bhat along with the passing of iconic pro-freedom leader Syed Ali Gilani after prolonged house detention, have deepened concerns over the humanitarian consequences of sustained incarceration, with allegations frequently pointing to inadequate medical care and prolonged incarceration. While each case differs in its details, the cumulative picture suggests a system under strain and a growing concern about the humanitarian implications of long-term detention.

These developments have drawn attention to international legal standards. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights prohibits torture and guarantees the right to fair trial, dignity and access to medical care. The Geneva Conventions establish principles for the humane treatment of individuals, including detainees, particularly in conflict situations. Prolonged detention without trial, denial of adequate medical treatment and restrictions on family contact are often cited as potential violations of these frameworks.

In Andrabi's case, reports of deteriorating health, lack of specialised medical care and separation from her family have intensified scrutiny. Her husband Dr Qasim Faktoo remains imprisoned in a different facility, and the couple has spent decades separated, with only minimal communication permitted. Such conditions are seen by critics not only as punitive but as deeply disruptive to family life and social stability.

India claims that its actions are 'lawful' and necessary for maintaining order in a region marked by decades of unrest. It asserts that the judiciary functions 'independently' and that all procedures have been followed. Yet the gap between official narratives and the lived experiences reported by detainees and their families is a complete contrast.

Political imprisonment carries a significance that extends beyond the individual. It serves as a signal, a warning and a demonstration of brutal authority. In Kashmir, where political identity and aspirations remain contested, such signals carry profound weight. The sentencing of Andrabi, given her age, health and history, is widely seen as a precedent that underscores the consequences of dissent.

At the same time, it raises a fundamental question about the future of political engagement in the occupied territory. If both violent and non-violent forms of resistance are met with similar punitive measures, the space for dialogue narrows

considerably. The absence of such space risks deepening alienation and prolonging conflict.

The story of Asiya Andrabi is therefore not only about one woman but about a broader trajectory in Kashmir's recent history. It is about the narrowing of political space, the expansion of legal instruments of control and the enduring human cost of unresolved conflict.

For the international community, the challenge is to move beyond expressions of concern towards meaningful engagement. Institutions such as the United Nations, Amnesty International and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation have repeatedly emphasised the need for adherence to human rights standards. Yet these calls have often remained limited to statements rather than concrete action.

The issues raised by Andrabi's case are not confined to Kashmir. They speak to universal principles about justice, freedom and the limits of state authority. They highlight the need for legal systems to balance security concerns with the protection of fundamental rights.

As Andrabi begins what may effectively be the remainder of her life in prison, her case stands as a stark reminder of the human consequences of political conflict. It calls attention to the urgency of addressing both the political and humanitarian dimensions of Kashmir.

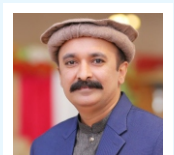
The path forward requires more than silence or symbolic gestures. It requires sustained attention, independent scrutiny and a commitment to upholding international legal standards. The international community must recognise that unresolved grievances and prolonged detentions do not lead to lasting stability.

If justice is to retain its meaning, it must be impartial, transparent and rooted in respect for human dignity. The continued incarceration of political leaders, the conditions under which they are held and the broader climate of repression demand urgent attention.

The world now faces a choice. It can remain a distant observer or it can act with purpose and conviction. In occupied Kashmir, silence does not merely reflect indifference. It risks becoming a form of complicity.

HUMAYUN AZIZ SANDEELA

The author is an Islamabad based journalist.



GHULAM MOHAMMAD SAFI

Six years after the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A, Kashmir remains at the heart of a deeply contested narrative, one defined by New Delhi as “normalcy,” but described by critics as a landscape of enforced silence, political suppression, and profound uncertainty.

In this wide-ranging interview, All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) Convener Ghulam Mohammad Safi voice examines the shifting realities on the ground, from the imprisonment of political leadership and allegations of custodial abuses to fears of demographic change, shrinking civic space, and the psychological toll on a generation growing up under surveillance. The conversation also interrogates the muted global response and asks whether any meaningful pathway to dialogue and resolution still exists.

KI: More than six years after the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, Kashmir is described by New Delhi as “normalised.” What does this so-called normalcy look like on the ground?

GMS: Let us be clear: what is presented as “normalcy” is, in reality, an engineered silence, the silence of suppression, not peace. The events of August 5, 2019 dismantled the region's constitutional status and reduced it to direct federal control, stripping away even the appearance of self-governance.

The immediate aftermath was marked by an unprecedented lockdown. Communications were severed, thousands detained, and daily life came to a standstill. People could not contact their families, access healthcare, or continue education. It was not stability, it was paralysis.

Six years on, repression has become more sophisticated. Speech is tightly controlled, journalists face legal intimidation, and surveillance has expanded into digital monitoring and biometric systems. Public gatherings remain restricted, and fear has become embedded in everyday life.

At the same time, new domicile laws have raised concerns about demographic shifts, while economic disruption has severely impacted livelihoods—from apple growers to artisans. When a region requires heavy troop presence, surveillance drones, and the

silencing of dissent to appear calm, that is not peace. It is control imposed under the language of normalcy.

KI: The imprisonment of leaders like Asiya Andrabi, Yasin Malik, and others has removed a generation of leadership. Is this a deliberate strategy?

GMS: There is little ambiguity, it reflects a systematic



attempt to neutralise political leadership. The sentencing of Asiya Andrabi, despite acquittal on major charges, has been widely viewed as symbolic of this trend. Similarly, figures like Yasin Malik, who had shifted to non-violent political engagement, languishes in Tihar Jail serving a life sentence. Masarat Alam Bhat, Shabir Ahmad Shah, Qasim Faktoo, an entire generation of leaders who represent decades of political thought, movement-building, and public trust, have been simultaneously removed from the public sphere.

When leadership is removed, movements lose coherence. The use of laws such as the UAPA allows prolonged detention with minimal legal recourse, effectively becoming punishment in itself. The pattern suggests a strategy: silence voices, fragment

the movement, and create space for alternative, more compliant structures.

Historically, such approaches have been used in many conflict regions. Whether or not they succeed depends on how deeply rooted the movement is within society.

KI: Deaths in custody have raised serious concerns. How grave is the humanitarian situation in prisons?

GMS: The deaths of figures such as Ashraf Sehrai, Altaf Ahmad Shah, and Ghulam Muhammad Bhat have intensified concerns about prison conditions. These cases are widely seen as preventable, linked to delayed medical care and prolonged detention under difficult conditions.

A recurring pattern is the detention of elderly or ailing individuals far from their families, limiting access to both medical support and emotional connection. Distance itself becomes an additional burden—families struggle to visit, and legal processes become more difficult to pursue.

Today, concerns persist regarding the health of several detainees. Calls for independent monitoring and humanitarian access continue, reflecting fears that the situation remains fragile and unresolved.

KI There are recurring allegations of staged or “fake” encounters. Are these isolated incidents or part of a pattern?

GMS: Over the years, multiple cases have raised questions about the nature of such encounters. Families often claim that individuals reported killed had already been in custody. Cases like Pathribal (2000), Machil (2010), and Shopian (2020) have reinforced these concerns.

While some incidents have been acknowledged or investigated, broader accountability remains limited. Legal frameworks such as AFSPA make prosecution difficult, contributing to perceptions of impunity.

When similar allegations emerge repeatedly across decades, they shape a narrative that goes beyond isolated incidents and raises questions about systemic issues.

KI: There are fears of demographic change due to new laws. Is Kashmir undergoing a structural transformation?

GMS: Post-2019 legal changes have altered residency and land ownership frameworks. The expansion of domicile eligibility has raised concerns about long-term demographic shifts, while property seizures targeting certain groups have added to these anxieties.

For many, this is not viewed as administrative reform but as a deeper transformation of identity and ownership. The implications are not only economic but also cultural and political.

If these trends continue, they could reshape the social fabric of the region in ways that are difficult to reverse.

KI: With media restrictions and surveillance, is there still space for dissent?

GMS: The space for dissent has narrowed considerably. Journalists operate under pressure, facing legal cases, raids, and the constant risk of reprisal. This has led to widespread self-censorship. Organised political activity outside state-approved frameworks is limited, with several groups banned or weakened. Surveillance, both physical and digital, has further restricted public expression.

Yet dissent has not disappeared. It has adapted. It exists in quieter forms, within families, communities, and the diaspora. When formal channels are closed, expression tends to find alternative pathways.

KI: How is this environment shaping Kashmiri youth?

GMS: Kashmiri youth are growing up in conditions defined by uncertainty, surveillance, and limited opportunity. Unemployment remains high, and economic stagnation has restricted prospects even for the educated.

At the same time, prolonged exposure to conflict has had psychological consequences. Studies have pointed to high levels of stress, anxiety, and trauma within the population.

This combination, economic limitation and psychological strain, is shaping a generation that feels both alienated and deeply conscious of its identity. Their worldview is being formed not only by aspirations, but by lived experience.

KI: Why has the international community failed to act meaningfully?

GMS: The gap between international legal principles and political action often comes down to interests. India's economic and strategic importance on the global stage influences how states respond.

Major powers prioritise trade, security partnerships, and geopolitical alignments. In such a context, issues like Kashmir receive limited attention despite existing legal frameworks.

Additionally, institutional limitations, such as the structure of the UN Security Council, further complicate enforcement. The result is a situation where acknowledgement exists, but action remains

minimal.

KI: Has Kashmir been sidelined globally? What would bring it back into focus?

GMS: Kashmir has not merely been sidelined but has been actively marginalised by a sophisticated Indian diplomatic effort that frames its occupation as a counter-terrorism operation, portrays dissent as extremism, and leverages its enormous geopolitical weight to suppress international scrutiny. The sidelining is deliberate; the silence is purchased.

In a world simultaneously grappling with the war in Ukraine, the catastrophe in Gaza, tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, and the reverberations of a restructuring global order, the attention of economy of international politics is finite. Kashmir is a conflict that has persisted for nearly eight decades without resolution, but suffers from what might be termed "conflict fatigue": a narrative that has been present so long it no longer registers as urgent. India exploits



this fatigue masterfully, but is also adept at preventing the world from taking serious notice of the issue. Especially after attempting to position themselves as an ally of Western interests.

Yet the stakes of continued neglect are not merely humanitarian, they are

existential for regional and global security. Kashmir is a nuclear flashpoint in the most literal sense. The two nuclear-armed states of India and Pakistan have fought multiple wars over this territory. The 2019 Balakot crisis brought both nations to the brink of military escalation with nuclear arsenals on either side. The 2025 incidents further illustrate that Kashmir remains an active conflict with the potential to escalate with catastrophic consequences. Ignoring Kashmir is not a neutral act; it is a gamble with nuclear fire.

Bringing Kashmir back into focus requires a multi-pronged strategy. Internationalising the self-determination narrative and as a fundamental question of international law and decolonisation is essential. Framing India's war as an expansionist agenda under the Hindutva agenda which emulates Zionism. Engaging the Global South, which understands occupation and liberation from direct historical experience, opens new diplomatic corridors. Amplifying the voices of Kashmiri civil society, diaspora communities, and international

human rights advocates through sustained, coordinated media engagement is critical. And reminding the world, with irrefutable documentation, that this is not a resolved dispute but a festering wound that will eventually rupture in ways that threaten everyone if left untreated.

KI: With Hurriyat leadership imprisoned, how is the movement sustaining itself?

GMS: Movements rooted in lived experience often persist beyond formal leadership structures. In Kashmir, the sense of shared history and collective memory continues to sustain political consciousness.

Imprisoned leaders sometimes become symbolic figures, while grassroots networks and diaspora communities play a growing role in keeping the narrative alive.

There are challenges, fragmentation, communication barriers, and resource constraints, but the continuity of the movement reflects its deeper social roots.

KI: Is there any realistic pathway for dialogue with New Delhi?

GMS: Dialogue remains a possibility, but its effectiveness depends on substance. For any process to be credible, it must involve all relevant stakeholders and address core political questions.

Without clarity of purpose or measurable outcomes, dialogue risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

A meaningful process would require trust, inclusivity, and a willingness to engage with fundamental issues rather than peripheral concerns.

KI: What is your message to the international community at this moment?

GMS: Let me begin with words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that still resonate: "The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty of the bad people, but the silence of the good." That silence defines Kashmir today. This is the tragedy unfolding in Kashmir today. It is not merely the cruelty of the oppressor. But the silence of those who possess the power to speak and choose not to. To the international community, governments, institutions, courts, civil society, and individuals, silence is not neutrality; it is complicity. When people are imprisoned for their beliefs, when peaceful leaders are silenced, and when communities face surveillance and dispossession, choosing to look away is a moral decision history will judge.

PAHALGAM AND INDIA'S MEDIA NARRATIVE ONE YEAR ON

In the year since the Pahalgam attack in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), the incident has refused to settle into history as a closed file. Instead, it lingers, unfinished, contested, and repeatedly reinterpreted, caught in a wider struggle over who gets to define reality in South

investigation and criticised what they described as premature attribution. The result was not simply disagreement over facts, but a widening gulf in interpretation each side speaking in a different evidentiary language, each audience consuming a different version of the same event.



Asia's most politically sensitive theatre.

What should have been a matter of investigation and judicial clarity has instead unfolded as something far more familiar to the region: a battle of narratives. Official statements, media reporting, political messaging and cross-border rebuttals have ensured that the event remains suspended between fact and framing, between what happened and what is believed to have happened.

In India's early official assessments, responsibility was attributed to cross-border militant networks. But it was the velocity of the media response that drew sustained scrutiny. Television studios filled the air with certainty before dust had settled on verification. Within hours, a dominant storyline had hardened, one that left little room for ambiguity, and even less for restraint.

In Pakistan, those claims were swiftly rejected. Officials called for an independent, international

This is where Pahalgam becomes more than an isolated episode. It becomes a case study in how quickly modern crises are absorbed into polarised information systems, where the urgency to narrate often overtakes the discipline to verify. In such moments, journalism risks shifting from explanation to acceleration.

Media scholars have been warning of this trajectory for years. In India, television news in particular has undergone a structural transformation, sharper, louder, and increasingly aligned with political identity. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism has documented a steady decline in trust in news in India, driven in part by perceptions of editorial alignment and the blurring of lines between reporting and advocacy.

The problem is not simply bias; it is speed without friction. In the Pahalgam case, critics pointed to how quickly a single explanatory framework took hold in

parts of the media ecosystem one that framed the incident through a cross-border security lens before investigative clarity had been publicly established. That early framing, once embedded, proved remarkably resistant to revision.

Yet this phenomenon is not uniquely Indian. Globally, the digital news cycle rewards immediacy over caution. Breaking news is no longer just reported; it is performed, consumed, and emotionally amplified in real time. But in South Asia, where history weighs heavily on perception, the consequences of premature certainty are far more combustible.

Pakistan's response remained grounded in international norms: it demanded credible, verifiable evidence linking the attack to its territory and offered to cooperate in an independent international investigation, an offer India flatly rejected. Outlets such as Reuters and BBC Monitoring primarily relayed official positions from both sides while emphasising the absence of independently verified evidence in the immediate aftermath. That gap, between domestic certainty and international caution only deepened the divergence in public perception.

What followed was equally predictable, almost procedural in its repetition: heightened military alertness, diplomatic exchanges, rhetorical escalation, and renewed cycles of accusation and denial. In many ways, the region was not reacting to a single incident, but replaying an established pattern of crisis behaviour that has defined India–Pakistan relations for decades.

Security analysts have long pointed out that this cycle is not merely political but structural. As scholar Happymon Jacob has observed in his work on crisis stability, the absence of reliable and institutionalised crisis communication mechanisms between the two countries increases the risk of misinterpretation, even when neither side actively seeks escalation.

But beneath the diplomatic choreography lies a more enduring and often overlooked layer: the lived reality of occupied Jammu and Kashmir itself. Human rights organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have repeatedly raised concerns about detentions, restrictions on civil liberties, and the broader impact of security operations on civilian life in the region.

Indian authorities, for their part, maintain that such measures are necessary counterinsurgency responses in a volatile security environment.

However, the cumulative effect of these operations extends beyond security, shaping social life in ways that are rarely captured in headline narratives.

It is here that the media's role becomes most consequential and most contested. In an era of 24-hour news cycles and algorithm-driven distribution, information travels faster than verification can follow. In India, this has produced an environment where national security incidents are often consumed as instant narratives rather than unfolding investigations.

The term “Godi media”, used by critics to describe outlets perceived as closely aligned with the Narendra Modi -led Bharatiya Janata Party government has become part of everyday political vocabulary. Its defenders reject the label as partisan rhetoric, but its persistence reflects something deeper: a widening trust deficit over how information is produced, framed, and consumed.

A year later, Pahalgam has not resolved into clarity. Instead, it has layered itself into an already dense archive of unresolved incidents that continue to shape how each side views the other. For India, it reinforced long-standing concerns about internal security and cross-border militancy. For Pakistan, it reinforced perceptions of rapid attribution and media-amplified escalation without conclusive proof.

But the larger lesson extends beyond this single episode. The region remains trapped in a cycle that is as predictable as it is fragile: an act of violence, immediate narrative construction, media amplification, diplomatic rupture, and long after, an unresolved struggle over meaning.

Breaking that cycle will require more than diplomacy or military deterrence. It will require something more difficult: restraint in narration, discipline in verification, and a willingness on all sides to accept that not every event can or should be instantly explained.

Because in South Asia today, conflicts are no longer shaped only by what happens on the ground. They are shaped, with equal force, by what is said about them in the first hours, and how permanently those first words harden into “truth”.

Until that changes, the region will remain vulnerable not just to escalation, but to the far more enduring conflict over perception itself.

KASHMIR INSIGHT ANALYSIS

**HOW INDIA'S 'PEACE' IN KASHMIR IS BUILT
ON GRAVES AND SHACKLES**

When Indian government officials and their surrogates in the media wax lyrical about the “return of normalcy” to Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), they conjure images of bustling markets, blooming tulip gardens, and a population grateful for “development.” It is a seductive narrative, carefully curated for international consumption and domestic political consumption alike. Yet, like all colonial fantasies, it collapses the moment it confronts the granite reality of the ground. The recent report by the Research Section of the Kashmir Media Service (KMS) shreds this propaganda veil with brutal clarity: in the first four months of 2026 alone, Indian forces have martyred fourteen Kashmiris—eight of them in fake encounters or cold-blooded custody killings—and arrested 1028 civilians, including students, women, and political activists. This is not normalcy. This is the calculated pacification of an occupied population through state terrorism.

To claim that IIOJK is “normal” requires a grotesque redefinition of the term. In the lexicon of New Delhi's public relations machinery, normalcy appears to mean the absence of visible mass protests, achieved not through consent but through the barrel of a gun. The statistics from the KMS report reveal the architecture of this enforced silence. The killing of ten Kashmiris, particularly the eight executed extrajudicially, is not an aberration; it is the continuation of a policy of extermination disguised as “counter-insurgency.” When troops gun down youth in staged encounters or torture detainees to death, they send an unambiguous message: Kashmiri life is expendable in the service of the

Indian state's territorial obsession. This is the “peace” that officials celebrate—a graveyard peace, maintained by the terror of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the State Investigation Agency (SIA), which have transformed judicial processes into instruments of collective punishment.

The repression extends far beyond the bullet. The report documents the arrest of 1028 individuals and the injuring of 33 peaceful protesters, illustrating that the Indian state is waging a war not just against armed resistance, but against civil society itself. The suspension of nine Kashmiri Muslim employees from government jobs and the attachment of properties belonging to forty-three families in just three months

represent a form of legal warfare designed to economically asphyxiate dissent. These are not random administrative actions; they are components of a systematic campaign to criminalize



Kashmiri identity. By targeting livelihoods and homes, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime and its RSS ideologues aim to render survival contingent upon absolute submission. This is the “integration” promised after the illegal abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A on August 5, 2019: a process where dissent is pathologized as terrorism, and the Muslim-majority character of the territory is assaulted through bureaucratic violence and demographic engineering.

Indeed, to understand the hollowness of the “normalcy” claim, one must locate it within the broader context of the Hindutva settler-colonial project. The revocation of the region's special status was never about development or governance; it was



about dismantling the legal barriers protecting Kashmiri land and identity from external settlement. The subsequent years have witnessed a calculated influx of non-local settlers, the alteration of domicile laws, and the gerrymandering of constituencies—all

designed to transform Kashmir from a Muslim-majority region into a Hindu-dominated one. The current wave of killings, arrests, and property seizures serves to terrify the indigenous population into acquiescence as this demographic manipulation unfolds. When officials speak of a “new Kashmir,” they are describing



a laboratory for ethnic restructuring, where the original inhabitants are either incarcerated, eliminated, or economically displaced to make room for a compliant settler population.

Moreover, the Indian narrative of normalcy relies on the complete erasure of Kashmiri political agency. The arrest of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders, human rights defenders, youth activists, and even students under draconian laws reveals a state terrified of dialogue and desperate to monopolize the discourse. In this dystopian “normal,” peaceful protest is met with teargas and bullets, and the expression of political aspiration invites a midnight knock from the NIA. The damage to a single home during cordon-and-search

operations, mentioned in the report, symbolizes the broader violation: the invasion of private spaces, the destruction of sanctuary, and the militarization of daily existence. For the thousands of families whose loved ones languish in prisons, for the families of the nearly one hundred thousand martyred during last 36 years, and for the thousands living under the shadow of property confiscation, “normalcy” is a macabre joke.

The international community's acquiescence to this narrative—driven by geopolitical expediency and Islamophobic indifference—provides the impunity necessary for these crimes to continue. But facts, unlike propaganda, are stubborn. The blood of the tens of thousands of martyrs, the shackles on the over 5000 detainees, and the rubble of demolished homes are the true monuments to India's rule in Kashmir.

True normalcy cannot be built on the foundations of military occupation. It cannot be measured by tourist footfall or internet speed while a population is gagged and caged. It requires the withdrawal of nearly a million troops, the repeal of black laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA),

Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) Public safety Act (PSA), the restoration of political rights, and, ultimately, the fulfillment of the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination. Until then, India's claims of normalcy will remain what they are: a grotesque alibi for an ongoing crime against humanity. The silence in Kashmir is not peace; it is the sound of a scream being strangled.

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WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND ELECTORAL TIMING

The evolving discourse around India's upstream water infrastructure has not remained confined to engineering debates or domestic policy discussions. It has increasingly entered the domain of regional security perception, particularly in Pakistan, where water is closely tied to

constituencies.

Following India's post-2025 recalibration of its position on the Indus Waters Treaty and the wider expansion of upstream infrastructure planning, Pakistan's National Security Committee adopted a markedly firm stance. In official statements, it warned



agricultural stability and national resilience.

As reported by NDTV on September 25, 2025, India's plans to advance inter-basin canal and tunnel infrastructure on the Indus system are being aligned, according to the report, with timelines extending toward the 2029 electoral cycle. Within regional analytical discourse, such timing has been interpreted by some observers as reflecting the growing intersection between large-scale infrastructure delivery and domestic political priorities in India, particularly in terms of demonstrating visible development gains to key

that any attempt to significantly alter or divert Pakistan's allocated water flows would be considered a matter of national security, with some political leaders describing such disruption as potentially crossing into the threshold of an "act of war." This reflects a hardening of strategic language that underscores how central water has become to Pakistan's security calculus.

At the diplomatic level, Pakistan has consistently framed these developments not as isolated engineering projects, but as part of a broader structural shift in basin governance. Concerns have

repeatedly been raised through the bilateral Indus Waters Commission mechanism and in international legal forums, including proceedings linked to hydropower disputes at the Permanent Court of Arbitration. The core argument advanced by Islamabad is not necessarily that water is being immediately withheld, but that cumulative upstream interventions—reservoir operations, cascade hydropower systems, and proposed inter-basin linkages—could gradually reduce predictability in

to river systems can intensify downstream uncertainty. Pakistan, as a lower riparian state with limited water storage capacity and high agricultural dependence on seasonal flows, is particularly sensitive to any shifts in timing or volume, even within treaty-permitted frameworks.

From this perspective, the emerging challenge in the Indus basin is not solely legal or technical, but increasingly interpretive. India's position

emphasises sovereign rights within treaty allocations and the need for infrastructure to meet domestic water and energy demands. Pakistan, in contrast, views cumulative upstream development through the lens of strategic vulnerability, where even incremental changes may compound existing stress on irrigation systems, groundwater reserves, and agricultural planning cycles.

The result is a widening gap in narrative perception: one side frames water infrastructure as development and resource

optimisation, while the other increasingly reads it as a potential lever of strategic influence. The absence of a shared interpretive framework has contributed to growing mistrust, even as the treaty continues to formally regulate basin operations.

In this environment, reports linking infrastructure planning to domestic political timelines—whether explicitly intended as political analysis or not—gain disproportionate geopolitical weight. They become part of a broader discourse in which water, infrastructure, and strategic intent are frequently read together, regardless of official confirmation.

Ultimately, the Indus basin is entering a phase where legal frameworks remain formally intact, but political interpretations are becoming increasingly divergent. It is this divergence—between treaty stability and strategic perception—that now defines the most sensitive dimension of India–Pakistan water relations.

KASHMIR INSIGHT ANALYSIS



downstream flows.

In this context, reports such as the NDTV investigation have been interpreted in Pakistan as reinforcing an already sensitive narrative: that large-scale water infrastructure in India's upstream regions is increasingly being integrated into broader domestic development and political planning cycles. The report's reference to a **14-kilometre tunnel**, a **113-kilometre canal system**, and alignment with a **2029 electoral timeline** has amplified concerns about the intersection of infrastructure delivery and political visibility. However, it is important to note that these elements remain at the **feasibility and detailed project report (DPR) stage**, with no confirmed evidence of full-scale construction of the described inter-basin diversion system.

The significance of such reporting lies less in immediate physical impact and more in its perceptual and strategic effects. In an already fragile hydrological environment shaped by climate change, as documented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, even proposed alterations

FAKE INDIAN NEWS PEDDLERS LINKED TO INDIAN AGENCIES PROPAGATING FALSE NARRATIVES ABOUT KASHMIR

After silencing media and political voices in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) through black laws and crackdowns, certain Indian media outlets—including theprint.in and dfrac.org—are now threatening and attempting to silence Kashmiris both inside the region and abroad.

Several Indian outlets are spreading misinformation at the behest of Indian intelligence agencies such as Military Intelligence (MI) and RAW, acting as their mouthpieces. These outlets intimidate Kashmiri people, issue threats, and operate under the influence of the Indian Home Ministry.

This has become a recurring pattern. In IIOJK, media outlets have reportedly abused and threatened Kashmiris on the ground while concealing the real situation. Meanwhile, the Kashmiri diaspora continues to highlight ground realities through fact-finding reports and refuses to be silenced. They remain committed to sharing truthful accounts of the territory.

Religious freedom also appears selective. Hindu festivals like Ram Navami are observed freely in Srinagar and Jammu, while Eid, Friday prayers, and other Muslim religious gatherings have faced restrictions. This raises serious questions about equality and fairness.

Is it justified that Eid is restricted while Hindu celebrations such as Ram Navami, Janam Ashtami, Holi, Navratri, and activities by RSS-affiliated groups are allowed freely in the Kashmir valley and in the Jammu region?

The silencing of Kashmiri voices has extended to political parties as well. Even parties like the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) are reportedly not allowed to protest in Srinagar. Kashmiris who speak out, demand political rights, or highlight injustice, occupation and state repression often face direct threats—particularly those abroad who advocate for self-determination.

Several credible reports from Srinagar indicate that

Indian media outlets have downplayed or overlooked instances of force used against peaceful mourners and protesters, including tear gas and pellet firing during demonstrations in March against the US-Israeli aggression on Iran and the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Certain Indian media outlets and agencies are spreading misleading information. Platforms such as The Print are promoting narratives aligned with official positions. Journalist Ananya Bhardwaj is also

perceived by some observers as reflecting viewpoints that closely align with narratives associated with agencies such as MI and RAW.

Kashmiris, as people of a disputed territory, seek a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute. However, certain Indian media outlets, linked to state agencies, have

been accused of spreading misleading information. Some journalists are also seen as working closely with Indian military and intelligence institutions, targeting and defaming Kashmiri leaders, including detained figures such as Aasiya Andrabi.

These narratives in sections of the Indian media frequently attempt to link the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination with violence, while the Indian government has used force and draconian laws to suppress media and political expression in IIOJK.

Such reporting is also been accused of falsely labeling legitimate political voices as militancy, resulting in harassment of Kashmiris both within and outside India. Families of those advocating peaceful solutions are also reportedly targeted.

Despite these challenges, Kashmiris—particularly those abroad—continue to raise their voices for justice, self-determination, and freedom from illegal occupation and repression.



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INDIAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

A DISASTER IN WAITING



The conflict of Indian-occupied Kashmir (IOK) is a longstanding dispute stemming from the 1947 partition of British India, characterized by a struggle for self-determination against Indian rule, recurring wars with Pakistan, and serious human rights abuses. The 2019 revocation of Articles 370 and 35A by India removed the region's autonomy, intensifying local alienation, shifting demography, and deepening the crisis.

The problem originated in 1947 when the ruler of the Muslim-majority princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, chose to join India, against the wishes of the majority population, who largely favored Pakistan. This triggered the first of several wars between India and Pakistan. The United Nations passed resolutions calling for a plebiscite (a direct vote) to determine the will of the people, which has never been implemented.

Today, IOK the region is one of the most heavily militarized zones globally. Reports frequently highlight systemic human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture by Indian forces' personnel. The indigenous resistance is fueled by decades of political oppression and disillusionment among younger generations. Extra-judicial killings and fake

encounters by Indian troops have become a norm in Kashmir for those who raise voice against brutalities. The entire Kashmir valley has turned into a prison, "the largest human jail on earth", with unprecedented restrictions. The new generation of Kashmiris, who have seen their loved ones get martyred in fake encounters and phoney cordon-and-search operations, have joined the path of resistance.

While India with malicious intentions hides her unprecedented brutality by raising the bogey of Pakistan sponsored terrorism, the movement is direct outcome of non- fulfillment of UN resolutions to which India happens to be a signatory. Primarily passed between 1948 and 1957, these resolutions affirm that the final status of Jammu and Kashmir must be decided through a free, fair, and impartial plebiscite under UN auspices. Key UN Security Council resolutions (47, 51, 80, 91, 122) established a ceasefire, mandated demilitarization, and recognized the right to self-determination. The current agitation in Indian-Held Kashmir is rooted in the struggle of the people for the exercise of the right of self-determination. Peaceful processions chanting demands for freedom were fired upon by Indian Army and police. Tens of thousands of men, women

and children have been killed or wounded. New Delhi's allegation of assistance to the Kashmiri people from the Pakistan side is unfounded. Objective reports in foreign media testify that the Kashmiri agitation is indigenous.

It has to be noted that although these resolutions were passed during late forties and early fifties the massive movement for freedom did not commence till the year 1990. This can be attributed to the fact that majority of Kashmiris believed that will of the international community will prevail and justice to their cause will be served. Conversely, India with malevolent intentions created a façade of honoring international commitments on one hand by engaging in marathon talks with Pakistan. However, behind the scenes she proceeded to tighten her grip on the region. Number of measures were taken to chip away the state autonomy including extending several federal laws to the region. A glaring example was bringing the region under the purview of Indian Supreme Court. In due course, exhibiting scant regard for international commitments, India started to make a different “song and dance” that claimed the region as its integral part. These actions and vicious rhetoric stirred the emotions of Kashmiri youth who felt betrayed and responded by launching a freedom struggle under new leadership.



Majority of Kashmiri people joined this movement that gained prominent international attention and became the subject of major international and India dailies. This unnerved Indian government, and they decided to counter this struggle by unleashing a reign of terror. In the unprecedented acts of savagery from 1990 to the present nearly one lac Kashmiris, mostly youth were murdered, 11,300 women gang raped, thousands of Kashmiris are missing and till date their whereabouts remain unknown. It needs to be mentioned that mass graves have been

discovered by Indian scholars and human rights activists in occupied Kashmir and the search launched by human right activists was halted by Indian government.

In August 2019, the Government of India revoked Article 370 — ending Jammu & Kashmir's special autonomous status — and increased the security footprint in the region. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other monitors noted that several pre-existing restrictions on free speech, assembly and movement have severely intensified since then. The goal is to (a) muzzle the voices supporting the demand for self-determination (b) eliminate as many youth as possible (c) confiscate the land and property of legal inhabitants (d) infuse armed Hindu fundamentalist to the region and facilitate their settlement (e) transfer the Muslim officials from key positions and fill them with Hindus with communal bent of mind (f) overall, rule Kashmir directly from New Delhi, extend measures that will subjugate the local population and enslave them mentally, socially and economically.

The major strategy that Indian government is implementing to change the demographics in occupied Kashmir post August 5, 2019, is “settler colonialism.” This is a process of territorial acquisition and demographic restructuring that India embarked into accelerated manner after revoking Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomy. By abolishing laws that protected local land ownership and residency rights, India is enabling the settlement of non-Kashmiris, aiming to transform the region's Muslim-majority demographic composition, dispossess indigenous inhabitants, and integrate the territory into a Hindu-nationalist frame.

Key Aspects of Settler Colonialism in Kashmir are:

- (1) Demographic Engineering: The repeal of Articles 370 and 35A allowed non-residents to acquire domicile certificates, enabling a “settler class” to move into the region.
- (2) Land Dispossession: New land laws permit the transfer of land to outsiders, reversing previous “land-to-the-tiller” reforms and threatening the livelihoods of Kashmiri farmers.
- (3) Cultural and Political Erasure: Indian policies aim to weaken Kashmiri identity, suppress local political narratives, and replace them with a narrative of “reclaiming” the land.

(4) Military Occupation: Supported by approximately 900,000 troops and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which provides legal impunity to Indian troops, the state enforces this transformation through intense surveillance and human rights violations.

(5) Economic Exploitation: Resources, including potential lithium deposits and forest land, are being increasingly controlled and extracted by the state, disregarding local environmental concerns.

Atrocities in Indian-occupied Kashmir often go unreported or lack international attention due to interplay of information suppression by Indian authorities and well-oiled propaganda machinery that distort the facts.

Settler Colonialism aspects in Kashmir involves:

1. Communication Blackouts and Media Restrictions: Indian authorities have historically used communication blackouts, including the suppression of internet services, to control the flow of information out of Indian occupied Kashmir. Journalists and human rights defenders face routine harassment, incarceration, and accusations of “terrorism” for reporting human rights violations, creating a climate of fear and self-censorship.

2. Immunity for Security Forces: The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) grants Indian forces' personnel legal immunity from prosecution for their actions in the region, which human rights organizations argue contributes to a lack of accountability and encourages further violations.

3. Government Denial: The Indian government has often dismissed reports of human rights abuses as part of an internal conflict, denying the reality on the ground and limiting external scrutiny.

4. Geopolitical and Economic Interests: Many nations remain silent on the issue due to “geopolitical prudence” and significant economic and trade interests with India. Western powers, in particular, often prioritize their strategic alignment with India to counter Chinese influence in the region over human rights concerns.

5. Lack of Access for International Observers: India has repeatedly been urged by the UN and other international bodies to allow independent investigations and unhindered access for UN Special Rapporteurs, independent journalists, and human rights organizations, but these calls have largely been ignored.

6. Information Control and Propaganda: India employs propaganda and specific campaigns to shape the international narrative and counter the

concerns raised by the Kashmiri people and human rights groups.

Despite these challenges, human rights organizations like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and UN reports have extensively documented serious allegations, including enforced disappearances, torture, sexual violence, and extrajudicial killings. These reports have raised international awareness and led to calls for the Indian government to be held accountable.

UN human rights experts have officially raised serious concerns about abuses in the region in recent months. Following the April 22, 2025, Pahalgam attack where 26 mostly civilian tourists were killed under false flag operation, Indian army operations intensified across Kashmir. UN experts condemned terrorism but also stressed that counter-terrorism responses must comply with international human rights law. They reported sweeping arrests and detentions of around 2,700–2,800 people, including students, journalists, and human rights defenders, in multiple districts. Those detained were often held under stringent laws like the Public Safety Act (PSA) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), which allow prolonged detention without charge or timely trial — a point of particular criticism from rights experts.

Independent reports and human rights organizations have documented several ongoing patterns:

Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions: Large-scale detentions of genuine leadership of Kashmir, civilians, students, journalists, and activists, often for extended periods without clear charges or trials. Cases such as Khurram Parvez, an internationally recognized human rights defender, have drawn condemnation for prolonged detention without trial.

Demolitions and Forced Evictions: Homes and properties have reportedly been demolished or confiscated without adequate notice, due process, or compensation, contributing to displacement and loss of livelihood.

Suppression of Speech and Assembly: Communication blackouts, restrictions on protests and public demonstrations, and blocking of social media accounts have all been reported as tools to limit dissent.

Allegations of Torture and Custodial Abuse: Reports of torture, custodial deaths, and intense interrogation methods have emerged from local sources and human rights coalitions, deepening concerns about due process and treatment of detainees.

Media and Civil Society Pressure: Human rights organizations say press freedom and civil society engagement face heavy restrictions; some journalists and activists have been arrested or had offices raided. Legal and Human Rights organizations emphasize due process, non-discrimination, and protection from arbitrary detention or torture.

UN experts and civil rights organizations have repeatedly called on Indian authorities to uphold these standards while addressing security challenges. Key documented concerns include:

1. Arbitrary detention without timely trial.
2. Use of anti-terror laws for prolonged incarceration.
3. House demolitions and forced evictions.
4. Restrictions on free speech and assembly.
5. Rampant cases of torture, molestation of women folk, custodial deaths, and suppression of civil society.

All these issues have been raised by UN experts, international rights organizations, and independent reports — and are part of continuing debates on human rights in Kashmir.

A group of UN human rights experts has publicly condemned what they term “serious human rights violations” in the territory and urged adherence to international laws. Moreover, many UN experts have expressed alarm and called for independent investigations, accountability mechanisms, and respect for fundamental freedoms. Notable among these are:

Ben Saul, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Morris Tidball-Binz, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

Nazila Ghanea, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context.

Nicolas Levrat, Special Rapporteur on minority issues

Conclusion

The situation in Indian-occupied Kashmir is highly contested and sensitive. As mentioned above independent observers, human rights organizations,

and UN experts have documented patterns of arbitrary detention, curtailed freedoms, forced evictions, communication controls, and suppression of civil society, raising alarm about ongoing rights violations. But all these concerns are falling on deaf ears, and Indian government is not only continuing but accelerating her pogrom to eliminate Kashmiri population and transform it into a land where Hindu religion/way of life dominates or prevails. Although human right organizations raise the voices against this unabated brutality, India is unmoved due to any consequences or retribution for her actions. It is amply evident that passing of resolutions or appeals without any disciplinary action will not cut ice.



Business sanctions by countries like USA or Arab nations like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar from which drives India's economic engine will undoubtedly have an effect.

During the May 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan, US President Donald J Trump had to intervene to bring the hostilities to standstill. Without mincing words, he unequivocally stated that his non-intervention would conflagrate the situation that could snowball into nuclear exchange. In a report published by non-government organization it is stated that nuclear war between India and Pakistan will affect more than 2 million people in the world. With both countries involved in multiplying their arsenal the consequences have a catastrophic potential. Unresolved Kashmir dispute is a powder keg and can be a trigger for the “disaster in waiting”. A serious attention towards this cataclysmic issue needs to be drawn.

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THE FORGOTTEN SUFFERING:

KASHMIRI WOMEN AND THE UNFULFILLED PROMISES OF THE WORLD

As the world observes International Women's Day on March 8, celebrating the achievements and resilience of women globally, the plight of Kashmiri women in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remains a dark and largely ignored chapter. Women in Kashmir have been among the worst victims of state oppression, enduring sexual violence, enforced disappearances, and the trauma of conflict for decades. The global community, despite its rhetoric on women's rights, has failed to address their suffering, leaving them to fight their battles alone.

For Kashmiri women, life is a continuous struggle against systemic oppression, militarization, and human rights abuses. The Indian military presence in the region has turned homes into prisons, where women live in constant fear of harassment, violence, and even death. The infamous Kunan-Poshpora mass rape incident of 1991 is a grim reminder of the brutality inflicted upon Kashmiri women. On the night of February 23-24, soldiers of the Indian Army gang-raped dozens of women in the twin villages of Kunan and Poshpora in north Kashmir. Despite multiple testimonies and international outcry, justice has remained elusive, as the Indian state systematically denied the survivors their due redressal.

One of the most heart-wrenching aspects of the Kashmir conflict is the phenomenon of half-widows—women whose husbands have been forcibly disappeared by Indian troops or state-backed militias, leaving them in perpetual limbo. As

of 2021, and reported by Taylor and Francis Online, the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) and the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) estimate that there are approximately 1,500 to 2,000 half-widows in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to reports, thousands of Kashmiri men have been taken into custody, never to return, while

their wives are left without closure, economic support, or social security. Many of these women are denied the right to remarry, stigmatized by society, and forced into extreme poverty. The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) has repeatedly

highlighted their plight, yet both the Indian government and international bodies have largely ignored their cries for justice.

Sexual violence has been used systematically in Kashmir as a tool of repression. Reports from human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have documented numerous cases where women have been subjected to rape and molestation by Indian forces' personnel. Yet, there has been little accountability. Courts have either dismissed the cases or delayed justice indefinitely, emboldening perpetrators and deepening the wounds of survivors.

The global community, which often speaks of gender justice and women's rights, has failed Kashmiri women miserably. While organizations such as the United Nations have mechanisms to address crimes against women in conflict zones, they have remained





Kashmir. The international community must take decisive action to ensure justice and accountability. Independent investigations into incidents such as the Kunan-Poshpora mass rape should be conducted under international supervision, holding perpetrators accountable without delay. The plight of half-widows—women whose husbands have disappeared but are not officially declared dead—must be recognized through legal frameworks that grant them economic and social rights, including financial assistance and inheritance

List of documented rape incidents, as reported by Human Rights Watch as Amnesty International, highlighting the widespread sexual violence faced by Kashmiri Women at the hands of occupying Indian forces IIOK

Date	Location	Number of Victims	Alleged Perpetrating Force	Source
February 23, 1991	Kunan and Poshpora	23 to 100	Indian Army (4th Rajputana Rifles, 68 Mountain Division)	Human Rights Watch Report, May 1993
August 20, 1991	Pazipora-Ballipora	8 to 15	Indian Army	Human Rights Watch Report, May 1993
October 10, 1992	Chak Saidpora	6 to 9	Indian Army (22nd Grenadiers)	Human Rights Watch Report, May 1993
July 20, 1992	Haran	Not specified	Indian Army	Human Rights Watch Report, May 1993
October 1, 1992	Gurihakhar	Not specified	Border Security Force (BSF)	Human Rights Watch Report, May 1993
June 17, 1994	Hyhama	7	Indian Army (Rashtriya Rifles)	Amnesty International Report, 1995
December 30, 1995	Wurwun	3	Indian Army (Rashtriya Rifles)	Amnesty International Report, 1995
April 22, 1997	Wavoosa	4	Indian Armed Forces	Human Rights Watch Report, May 1993
October 5, 1998	Ludna, Doda District	1	Indian Army (8th Rashtriya Rifles)	Human Rights Watch Report, May 1993
October 29, 2000	Bihota	1	Indian Army (15 Bihar Regiment)	Human Rights Watch Report, May 1993
May 29-30, 2009	Shopian	2	Indian Troops	Amnesty International Public Statement, July 23, 2013

entitlements. The entrenched culture of impunity for sexual violence committed by Indian forces must end, with those accused of such crimes prosecuted under international law, and draconian protections like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) revoked. Furthermore, the United Nations must play an active role by appointing a special rapporteur to monitor and report specifically on the condition of women in Kashmir, ensuring

largely ineffective in Kashmir. Resolutions passed on conflict-related sexual violence have rarely translated into action in Kashmir, as political interests and India's diplomatic leverage have prevented meaningful interventions.

The UN's inability to enforce its own resolutions on Kashmir has exposed its selective approach to human rights. Unlike other conflict zones where the UN and international tribunals have taken action, Kashmiri women continue to suffer in silence, with no hope of justice. The lack of international media coverage, coupled with India's aggressive suppression of dissent, has further pushed the issue into obscurity.

Observing Women's Day should go beyond celebrating progress; it must also spotlight the unresolved struggles of women in conflict zones like

international pressure on India to uphold human rights and justice for Kashmiri women.

As the world moves forward with campaigns for women's empowerment, Kashmiri women continue to remain unheard. Their pain, suffering, and resilience should serve as a wake-up call for the global feminist movement and human rights organizations. Women's Day should not just be about celebrating achievements but also about demanding justice for those who have been systematically oppressed. The world cannot afford to turn a blind eye any longer; Kashmiri women deserve justice, dignity, and peace—just like every other woman in the world.

KASHMIR INSIGHT PREVIEW

EROSION OF KASHMIRI VOICES

FROM STATE HIERARCHY

In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, gradual erosion of Kashmiri voices from the state hierarchy is perhaps the biggest challenge the region's majority population is facing today. They are not just politically sidelined — they are systematically being pushed out of the institutions that once gave them a say in their own governance. Biased recruitment practices, reservation recalibrations that skew opportunities away from Valley candidates, and the deliberate invocation of regional and communal narratives by those in the corridors of power have steadily hollowed out the

Kashmiri voices from the institutions meant to serve them.

Behind the façade of electoral legitimacy lies a calculated interplay of biased recruitment policies, skewed reservation frameworks, and the deliberate use of regionalism and communal narratives by those in power, determined to hollow out the space for ethnic Kashmiris. A cursory look at recent recruitments makes it clear how governance is being reshaped into a hierarchy that no longer reflects the people it is meant to serve.

Consider recruitment data. In the 2022 JKPSI (Sub-



Inspector) process conducted after the 2019 reorganisation, roughly 79% of the selected candidates came from Hindu-majority Jammu region, while Muslim-dominated Kashmir Valley accounted for only about 17%. Reserved category allocations such as SC and ALC/IB went almost entirely to Jammu. Subsequent

space for ethnic Kashmiris. This is no longer a debate confined to politics; it is a structural reality that shapes everyday life and opportunity.

The 2024 Assembly elections were projected as an important milestone to restore normalcy and rule of law after years of direct central rule. But what is unfolding under that veneer tells a different story — one of exclusionary politics that is steadily erasing

police constable recruitments (2025–2026) followed the same pattern, with the Valley claiming barely 15–20% of posts, despite being home to over half (nearly 60%) of the region's population. Judicial recruitment, too, has shown similar imbalances.

Similarly, around 11.8 lakh reservation certificates have been issued across multiple categories. A large proportion of these certificates have been issued in

the Jammu division compared to the Kashmir division.

Under the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category, Jammu accounts for 92.5% of the certificates while Kashmir receives only 7.4%. A similar pattern is visible in the Scheduled Caste (SC) category, where 98.76% of certificates have been issued in Jammu and merely 1.24% in the Kashmir Valley. In the Actual Line of Control (ALC) category, Jammu holds 93.6% compared to 6.4% for Kashmir, while in the International Border (IB) category the entire 100% share belongs to Jammu with none issued in Kashmir. The Other Backward Classes (OBC) category also shows a noticeable tilt, with 59.8% certificates issued in Jammu and 40.2% in Kashmir.

These figures go beyond statistics — they reveal a deliberate pattern, one that gradually pushes ethnic Kashmiris out of institutions that should reflect their community. Such recalibrations in the reservation framework have intensified concerns among the majority population in the region that they are being deliberately pushed to the margins. By the way they have reason to believe so, as in just a couple of years the RBA quota allocated to the Valley has fallen from 20 percent to 10 percent, while other categories — largely benefiting Jammu — have either been retained or expanded.

Far from being a reform, it represents a form of structural exclusion that steadily narrows opportunities for local youth.

On the other hand, policies of this nature, have the potential to significantly reshape the region's administrative, cultural, linguistic and political landscape. As recruitment patterns increasingly tilt away from the Valley, the composition of the bureaucracy is bound to change, gradually reducing the representation of local Muslims within key institutions.

A look at the Valley's administrative structure reveals a striking pattern: many key positions are occupied by non-Kashmiri bureaucrats drawn from other Indian states. The Lieutenant Governor (LG) of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, for instance, is a non-Kashmiri, and several senior posts in the police hierarchy — including the Director General of Police (DGP) and the heads of agencies such as the State Investigation Agency (SIA) — are held by officials who are not from the region.

Over time, this shift may also alter the linguistic and cultural character of governance in the Valley, where Kashmiri, the predominant local language risks being pushed to the margins as administrative

spaces become less reflective of the region's social and linguistic realities.

Political leaders across Kashmir have consistently warned that the existing reservation framework erodes merit and sidelines the ethnic Kashmiri community.

Unfortunately, the present day government, which capitalised on Kashmiri sentiment in the previous elections, has failed to protect the fundamental interests of the Kashmiri people. It appears totally paralyzed and unable to respond to the real concerns of the people, who are steadily being pushed to the periphery of their own land.

When it comes to restoring the region's statehood or defending its territorial integrity they once called non-negotiable, the National Conference has once again disappointed those who entrusted them with power.

Kashmir today stands divided not only along political lines, but this divide has also permeated administrative processes at every level. Bureaucratic postings, resource allocation, and routine decisions are all filtered through a communal lens. Officers are no longer judged by their competence, but by their religion or region of origin.

At the top tier of governance, these fault lines are even more visible. In so-called Legislative Assembly elected representatives frequently appear to champion community interests rather than the broader interests of the state. Assembly debates are increasingly dominated by voices that champion regional and communal interests, often at the expense of the state's broader welfare.

In January 2026, a senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and MLA made headlines by calling for a separate state for Jammu and casting doubts on the loyalty of residents in the Kashmir Valley.

The discourse that fosters communal divisions also underscores the RSS-BJP's ideological focus on Hindu nationalism, using stereotyping as a political strategy that intensifies mistrust rather than encouraging reconciliation.

Once priding itself on a shared, composite identity, Jammu and Kashmir today faces stark polarization, with fault lines running through its political, administrative, and psychological landscape.

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THE CASE FOR COURAGEOUS DIPLOMACY

The world breathed a collective sigh of relief when a potentially catastrophic confrontation in the Gulf was paused at the eleventh hour. Hundreds of millions across Iran and neighboring states were spared the horrors of imminent conflict, and billions of dollars' worth of infrastructure and human livelihood were saved—at least for now—by a ceasefire between the United States and Iran. Announced just minutes before the deadline on April 7, President Donald J. Trump's decision to suspend military action—following consultations with Pakistan's leadership and conditional upon the safe reopening of the Strait of Hormuz—demonstrated a



critical truth: even at the brink of war, diplomacy can prevail over destruction. President Trump mentioned on Truth Social “Based on conversations with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir, of Pakistan, and wherein they requested that I hold off the destructive force being sent tonight to Iran, and subject to the Islamic Republic of Iran agreeing to the complete, immediate, and safe opening of the Strait of Hormuz, I agree to suspend the bombing and attack of Iran for a period of two weeks.”

This moment offers a lesson that extends far beyond the Gulf. It underscores a principle too often ignored in global conflicts—that enduring solutions are not forged through military might, but through meaningful negotiation. Nowhere is this lesson more urgently needed than in Kashmir.

For nearly eight decades, the Kashmir dispute has remained one of the most dangerous unresolved conflicts in the world. It is not merely a territorial

disagreement; it is a persistent flashpoint between two nuclear-armed states—India and Pakistan—whose tensions have repeatedly brought South Asia to the edge of catastrophe.

Despite its gravity, Kashmir has largely been relegated to the margins of international diplomacy. This neglect stands in stark contrast to earlier periods when global leaders recognized its urgency. In 1996, Senator Jesse Helms, then Chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, advocated for American mediation on Kashmir with the same determination that had been applied to peace efforts in the Middle East. That sense of urgency appears to have faded, even as the risks have grown.

President Trump himself acknowledged the explosive potential of the Kashmir conflict. As early as 2016, he offered to mediate between India and Pakistan—a proposal he reiterated multiple times. Following heightened tensions in 2025 that brought both countries dangerously close to nuclear confrontation, the diplomatic engagement of President Trump helped secure a ceasefire on May 10, 2025.

That moment could have been a turning point. Calls were made for structured dialogue, including a proposal by Marco Rubio, Secretary of State for the National Security Advisors of both countries to meet at a neutral venue to discuss all issues. Yet, in the months that followed, no meaningful progress materialized. The opportunity for sustained engagement slipped away, leaving the underlying conflict unresolved.

The international community once spoke with clarity on Kashmir. United Nations Security Council Resolution 47, adopted on April 21, 1948, established that the future of the territory should be determined through a free and impartial plebiscite under UN auspices.

This was not a symbolic gesture. The resolution was negotiated with the explicit consent of both India and Pakistan, embedding it with legal and moral weight. It laid out a framework grounded in demilitarization, neutrality, and the unimpeded expression of the will of the Kashmiri people.

Even India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru,

publicly affirmed this principle, stating that India would accept the outcome of such a plebiscite—even if it went against its own interests. Over time, however, this commitment has faded into diplomatic obscurity.

The UN Security Council Resolution 47 remains a cornerstone in the international legal framework governing the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. The resolution is significant for formalizing the plebiscite machinery under international auspices. It mandated the appointment of a Plebiscite Administrator, nominated by the United Nations, who would oversee the process to ensure that the expression of the popular will was free, impartial, and unencumbered.

This provision transformed the Kashmir issue from a bilateral or internal matter into a question of international responsibility, embedding safeguards against manipulation. The insistence on demilitarization, neutrality of administration, and freedom from fear or pressure created a legal and procedural architecture designed to guarantee that the vote would reflect genuine consent.

The persistence of the Kashmir dispute has exacted a heavy toll—not only on the people of Kashmir but also on India and Pakistan themselves. It has fueled militarization, strained economic development, and entrenched hostility between two nations that share deep historical, cultural, and geographical ties.

For India, aspirations of global leadership are undermined by the existence of a long-standing unresolved dispute. For Pakistan, the conflict continues to remain source of uncertainty. For both, it represents a continuing source of instability and missed opportunity.

History offers warnings that remain relevant today. During the UN Security Council debates in 1948, British representative Philip Noel-Baker described Kashmir as “the greatest and the gravest single issue in international affairs.” Decades later, that assessment still resonates.

The question is no longer whether Kashmir requires resolution—it clearly does—but whether the international community has the will to act.

The recent de-escalation in the Gulf shows that even the most volatile crises can be managed when leaders choose restraint over escalation. It demonstrates that diplomacy, when pursued with urgency and sincerity, can avert disaster. Why should Kashmir be any different?

The path forward requires courage—political, moral, and diplomatic. It demands that global powers,



including the United States, re-engage with the issue not as distant observers but as facilitators of dialogue. It calls for India and Pakistan to move beyond entrenched positions and for Kashmiri voices to be meaningfully included in any process. Peace in Kashmir is not an unattainable ideal. It is a deferred responsibility.

If the world can act decisively to prevent conflict in the Strait of Hormuz, it can—and must—summon the same resolve to address one of the longest-standing and most dangerous disputes of our time. The lesson is clear: when diplomacy is given a chance, it can save lives. The tragedy is that in Kashmir that chance has been postponed for far too long.

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INDIA'S DIPLOMATIC MELTDOWN: WHEN WORDS COLLAPSE BEFORE STRATEGY

Diplomatic language is always chosen with care, shaped with intent and used with purpose. It carries weight and sets the tone of a state's conduct. In many ways, it acts as the outer shell of a state's composure—calm, controlled and purposeful. But what happens when that shell begins to crack? It reveals something far less reassuring: uncertainty beneath the surface.

This is where Indian Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar's remark enters the frame. When he declared that “India is not a broker state like

undeniable embarrassment and diplomatic humiliation for India.

While India speaks of democratic credentials, global influence and economic rise, it simultaneously overlooks internal contradictions i.e., press freedom concerns, communal tensions and increasing centralization of power. International indices have reflected this unease. Reports from organizations such as Freedom House have downgraded India's democratic standing in recent years, placing it in the category of “partly free.” This not only eliminates

India's strengths but also complicates its claims.

Despite this, the tone of overconfidence has remained intact. It has assumed that its size, economy and strategic location automatically translate into diplomatic centrality. The recent crisis has challenged that assumption.

When Iran-

related tensions escalated, India was not at the table neither consulted nor considered a serious mediator. Instead, Qatar, Oman and notably Pakistan were engaged. For a country that has offered to mediate in conflicts like Russia–Ukraine, this exclusion is revealing. Mediation depends on trust, neutrality and access, areas where India's recent positioning has weakened its standing. Its alignment with Western blocs raises questions about neutrality, reluctance to challenge the United States affects credibility and inconsistent messaging limits access. Data from 2024–2025 shows over 60% of mediation efforts in



Pakistan,” he did not elevate India's stature, he successfully diminished it. The statement was not just inelegant; it was strategically injudicious. Because diplomacy has its own grammar and in that grammar, restraint is not weakness. It is DISCIPLINE. India today is not facing a sudden diplomatic setback, it is confronting the consequences of a long-cultivated illusion. India's foreign policy narrative has increasingly revolved around its own exceptionalism. For years, it has projected itself as the indispensable power, the voice of the Global South and the only state capable of balancing East and West. But the Iran crisis has exposed an

West Asia involved Qatar, Oman, or Pakistan, making India's absence striking.

When states feel excluded, they often respond with irritation. When that irritation surfaces in official language, it becomes exposure. Diplomacy does not operate through denial. If India truly did not see mediation as relevant, it would not need to distance itself from it so aggressively. The very need to reject the label reveals sensitivity.



More importantly, the statement creates a contradiction. India has previously expressed willingness to mediate in global conflicts. Prime Minister Modi has stated that India is ready to contribute to peace efforts in Ukraine. Senior officials have emphasized India's role as a stabilizing force. If mediation is acceptable in one context, why is it dismissed in another?

This inconsistency does not go unnoticed. It raises questions about whether India's positions are guided by principle or convenience. And once such questions arise, credibility begins to erode. The embarrassment here is not loud, it is subtle. It lies in the gap between what India says about itself and how others respond to it.

While India is busy clarifying its non-broker status, Pakistan has pursued a markedly different approach, one defined by precision rather than projection. Pakistan has not declared itself the leader of any bloc. It has not framed itself as indispensable. Instead, it has quietly positioned itself as useful. This distinction matters.

Pakistan's diplomatic engagement has focused on

maintaining working relations across competing powers. It has engaged the United States, strengthened ties with China, sustained connections with Gulf states and kept channels open with Iran. This multi-vector approach has allowed it to operate as a bridge when communication becomes difficult.

At the same time, Pakistan's military establishment has ensured that diplomacy is backed by credible deterrence. The Pakistan Army remains a central

pillar of the country's strategic posture. Its preparedness and regional awareness assure that diplomatic commitments are supported by capability. This combination creates reliability.

Pakistan has also preserved a degree of strategic autonomy. It has avoided becoming fully dependent on any single power structure. This flexibility increases

its acceptability as a mediator or facilitator. Pakistan has been involved in indirect communication channels during sensitive negotiations. These roles are rarely publicized, but they are acknowledged where it matters within decision-making circles. Pakistan does not need to announce its relevance. It is recognized.

The contrast between India and Pakistan at this moment is not about size or economic scale. It is about the approach. India has relied on projection, asserting its importance, emphasizing its identity and expecting recognition. Pakistan has relied on positioning, building relationships, maintaining balance and offering utility.

In the end, Jaishankar's remark will be remembered not for its wording, but for its context. It arrived at a moment when India was expected to act, but chose instead to explain. And in doing so, it created a peculiar situation.

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CHATTISINGHPORA MASSACRE: THE UNTOLD TRUTH BEHIND INDIA'S DEADLY DECEPTION

On a cloudy evening of March 20, 2000, Chattisinghpora, a hilltop hamlet in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir's (IIOJK) Islamabad district, became the site of a massacre that claimed the lives of 35 men and children of the region's minority Sikh community. It happened close to then U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit to India (Human Rights Watch 2000). The assailants, in disguise, lined up the Sikhs from the village and shot them to death.

Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed several carnages since 1931, including the Kashmir agitation against Dogras, the Jammu and Rajouri massacres in 1947 after the partition of the



subcontinent, and later at the hands of Indian forces in the 1990s, including the Gawakadal, Handwara, Zakoora, Tengpora, Hawal, Bijbehara, Sopore, and Kupwara massacres (Amnesty International 2017). In 2000, with President Clinton visiting, India—through its Hindu extremist organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)—turned its attention toward the Sikhs of IIOJK. The intention was not only to suppress the Kashmiri freedom movement but also to create an impression upon the visiting U.S. president that the Kashmir liberation movement was of a 'communal nature' (Albright 2006).

Earlier, during the 1990s, India had successfully persuaded the Pandit community to leave the Valley in an attempt to communalize the Kashmir dispute on the global stage (India Today 2020). Instead of offering protection to the Pandits, the Indian government issued advisories asking them to quit the Kashmir Valley, facilitating their departure as part

of the RSS-devised plan to portray Kashmir as a 'communal' issue rather than a struggle for self-determination (The Wire 2021). The notion is strengthened by the fact that, despite several petitions, the Indian government has refused to investigate the Pandit migration from the Valley. After the Pandits, Indian agencies advised their RSS operatives to target the Sikh community.

On March 20, 2000, 30-40 heavily armed men

entered Chattisinghpora, located in Islamabad district, and ordered all Sikh men to assemble at the local gurdwara. The gunmen systematically shot and killed 35 of them. However, survivors noticed

something unusual—the attackers did not appear to be Kashmiris. They looked more like people from southern India (Frontline 2000). While leaving, they chanted pro-India slogans. The lone survivor of the Chattisinghpora massacre, Nanak Singh, recounted:

“They [RSS goons] were calling each other with the names Pawan, Bansi, Bahadur, and they left while shouting ‘Jai Hind’.”

The stories of survivors are consistent. About 20 men, clad in olive green combat fatigues, arrived in the village at 7:15 p.m. They told the people they were soldiers and ordered the men outside for questioning. Once lined up in two groups a few hundred meters apart, the firing began. As they started shooting, the gunmen shouted 'Jai Mata Di' and 'Jai Hind' (The Sikh News Express 2017). While leaving, one of them called out:

“Gopal, chalo hamare saath” (Come with us, Gopal).

Under immense pressure to solve the case, the Indian army later apprehended five Kashmiris and eliminated them in a staged shooting in Pathribal. The Indian army claimed the dead men were foreign militants who died in an exchange of fire, though none of the soldiers were injured (CBI 2006). The army also claimed they were able to identify the men with the help of another militant, who was later released after authorities failed to present any corroborative evidence before the courts (BBC News 2014).

Following the Pathribal episode, there was a huge



acknowledging that others were also involved (CBI 2006).

DNA analysis conducted under the CBI confirmed that the five men killed in Pathribal had been abducted from their homes before the staged encounter. The CBI also found evidence contradicting the Indian army's claim that the encounter was genuine: while the bodies of the victims were burned beyond recognition, their so-called 'hideout' was left intact. The investigation ultimately revealed that those killed in Pathribal were local Kashmiris who had been murdered (BBC News 2014). Despite this, the Indian army sought to exonerate the soldiers or RSS operatives involved.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in her memoir, stated that President Clinton suspected Hindu extremists were behind the Chattisinghpora massacre (Albright 2006). Her book, *The Mighty and the Almighty*, directly accused Hindu militants of orchestrating the killings. This revelation angered the Indian government, leading to pressure on publishers to amend the content.

More than two and half decades later, the families of the victims of Chattisinghpora, Pathribal, and Brakpora massacres are still seeking justice. Given the circumstances, India is unlikely to be honest about these events, considering its army's complicity and the involvement of Hindu extremist groups like RSS. India's poor human rights record, its patronage of Hindu extremists, and its lack of political will to hold them accountable only reinforce this reality (OHCHR 2018).



outcry in Kashmir. The families of those killed maintained that they were locals who had been picked up by the army before the alleged shootout. Protests erupted, demanding an investigation, but on April 3, 2000, Indian forces killed nine more people in Brakpora during demonstrations (Amnesty International 2017). Among the dead were relatives of the Pathribal victims.

In 2017, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) K.S. Gill, who was part of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into the 2006 Pathribal fake encounter, revealed in an interview with *The Sikh News Express* that the Indian army was involved in the massacre. The report was submitted to L.K. Advani, then Home Minister in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government (*The Sikh News Express* 2017). On May 9, 2006, the CBI concluded its investigation and filed a charge sheet against five personnel of the 7 Rashtriya Rifles,

KASHMIR INSIGHT PREVIEW

CRUSHING VOICE: THE STRUGGLE OF KASHMIR YOUTH

In places where power fears scrutiny, even the most ordinary acts are recast as threats. The right to observe, record, and speak becomes conditional, fragile and easily withdrawn. Nowhere is this more evident than in Indian illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, where everyday life is shaped less by formal legality and more by an atmosphere of control and caution.

A young student in Srinagar films a military convoy in his neighbourhood. Within moments, police stop

him, seize his phone and take him in for questioning. He has broken no law; he simply pointed a camera at a public street. Yet the message he carries back is clear: "Think twice before speaking."

This is not a classroom lesson, but an unwritten rule of daily life. Control here is rarely dramatic. It works through routine encounters that instill a constant awareness that expression carries consequences many cannot afford.

Since 2019, public protests in IloJK have been effectively outlawed in practice if not always in statute. Demonstrations against land reform, vigils for slain civilians, student gatherings on university campuses have all been met with batons, tear gas and mass arrest. During 2024 and 2025, police detained hundreds of students and young people following protest activity. In one documented instance, young Kashmiris who participated in a protest over a local grievance were charged with "waging war against the state," a provision of Indian law that carries a potential death sentence. They had attended a public demonstration. India charged them as combatants.

Local lawyer Parvez Imroz, who has spent decades documenting abuses in the valley, stated that the state is arresting noncombatant activists and protesters at an alarming and unprecedented rate. His observation is not rhetorical. In 2025 alone, human rights monitors documented at least 150 Kashmiri youths detained during peaceful shutdowns and vigils. UN experts confirmed that Indian forces were detaining journalists, students and young protesters under terrorism laws whose



application to nonviolent political activity has no basis in any legitimate legal framework. Over half of those arrested remained in custody for months without trial.

Shouting "Azadi" at a rally has resulted in anti-terror charges.

Distributing leaflets on a college campus has resulted in sedition proceedings. A human rights lawyer who works with detained youth put it plainly: they want to teach these kids a lesson about speaking their mind. The lesson India is teaching a generation of Kashmiris is that their voice is a punishable offence.

Beyond the arrests lies a broader and more insidious architecture of intimidation. Indian forces conduct random night raids on homes, arriving without explanation. Curfews and mobile internet shutdowns are imposed preemptively whenever rumours of protest circulate, cutting communities off from each other and from the outside world before any demonstration has even begun. The International Federation for Human Rights has documented that India's preventive detention laws have become, in their assessment, little more than a tool to silence dissent and ensure self-censorship. The goal is not



publicly that without legitimate outlets for grievance, anger will seek other means. This is not a prediction from Pakistan. It is an observation from within the Indian political establishment in Kashmir itself. A state that criminalizes peaceful dissent does not eliminate the underlying discontent. It removes every mechanism through which that discontent could be expressed

to punish every dissenter. It is to ensure that most Kashmiris punish themselves, internalizing the prohibition before the state ever needs to enforce it. This is the more efficient form of repression. A prison that builds itself inside the mind requires far fewer cells.

The CIVICUS Monitor, in its January 2026 assessment, formally classified IloJK as having a “repressed” civic space, documenting that student protests are met with detentions and criminal charges as standard practice. Rights groups no longer describe Kashmir as a restricted democracy. They describe it as a space where the infrastructure of democratic expression, assembly, speech, protest, petition, has been systematically dismantled and replaced with fear.

India justifies this suppression, as it justifies everything in IloJK, through the language of security. But there is a calculation India is either not making or deliberately ignoring. When an entire generation grows up with the experience that peaceful expression leads to arrest, that a phone camera earns a detention, that the word “freedom” spoken aloud constitutes terrorism, that generation does not become reconciled to the state. It becomes permanently estranged from it. Even former Kashmiri ministers have warned

without violence, and then expresses surprise when violence is what remains.

India is not suppressing extremism in IloJK. It is suppressing the alternative to it. Every student charged with waging war for attending a protest, every young man who learns to silence himself before speaking, every generation that grows up



understanding that the state views their voice as a threat, is a generation for whom the distance between grievance and something far more dangerous has been shortened, not by militants, but by the state itself.

Silence imposed by fear is not peace. It is the pressure that builds before something breaks.

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Beauty Thy Name Is



Visit to Jammu and Kashmir is outstanding experience for everyone in lifetime. This place is heavenly blessed with numerous unmatched attractions, which are admired throughout the year. Its sheer natural bounty including snowcapped silver mountains and wide varieties of flora and fauna have earned it the title 'heaven on earth'. It is the most favored destination among nature-lovers, honeymooners and adventure seekers. Visit to this beautiful place is like



dream comes true, which is really beyond the word to describe. Journey to this beautiful place is equally to discover the beautiful world. This beautiful place is generally known for majestic mountains, romantic rivers, salubrious climate, snow-covered valleys and the lovely Mughal gardens. Apart from these attractions there are plenty of options for adventure seekers. Tourists can enjoy various adventurous activities at the hill stations where such fun filled opportunities galore. Snow sports, specially skiing, are something that lures many tourists. Although there are several enchanting tourist places in Kashmir but the most highlighted ones for beauty and adventure are Sonamarg, Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Srinagar.

TOURIST PLACES IN KASHMIR

SONAMARG: This place is synonymous with quiet meadows and flower-carpeted fields surrounded by amazing glaciers, miniature plateaus, snowfields, pines and islets. This region, just 80 km away from Srinagar, has some of the highest mountain ranges of the world. The snow-clad peaks when reflect the golden rays of the sun, give a sparkling effect to the entire Valley. The glaciers, waterfalls, and placid lakes add some more beauty to this place. Along with its tremendous beauties, this place has ample opportunities for adventure enthusiasts.

GULMARG: Gulmarg, which means 'meadow of flower', is known for its lush green slopes and legendary beauty and is situated in Baramulla district of occupied Kashmir. The hill resort has magical meadows, snow-clad peaks and exquisite panorama.

PAHALGAM: Pahalgam, also major tourist attraction in occupied Kashmir, is famous for inviting natural beauty. This hill station is situated at the confluence of the streams flowing from Sheshnag Lake and the Lidder River.

SRINAGAR: Srinagar, the capital of occupied Kashmir, is an enthralling and mesmerizing city. This place is dotted with several enchanting attractions including beautiful lakes, aromatic Mughal gardens and many alike, which make this place completely outstanding. Dal Lake is the major attraction of this place, which is globally acclaimed for its pristine beauty.

Kashmir is visited by tourists to see and explore its heavenly natural beauty and its astounding tourist places.