

KASHMIR INSIGHT

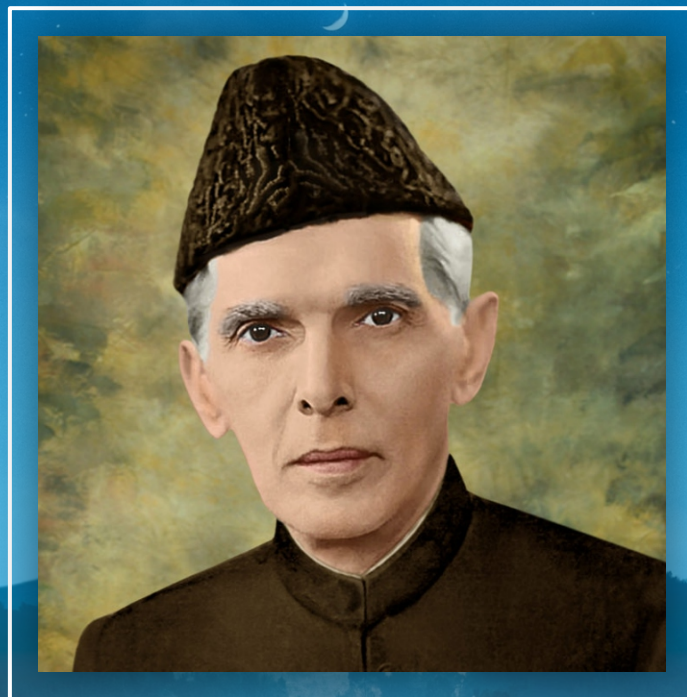
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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
MAHMOOD AHMAD SAGHAR

KASHMIR'S MEMORY UNDER SIEGE





"We are all passing through perilous times. The drama of power politics that is being staged in Palestine... and Kashmir should serve as an eye opener to us. It is only by putting up a united front that we can make our voice felt in the counsels of the world."

QUAID-E-AZAM MUHAMMAD ALI JINNAH,

*Last Message on Foreign Policy
on 28th August 1948*

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ATROCITIES BY INDIAN TROOPS

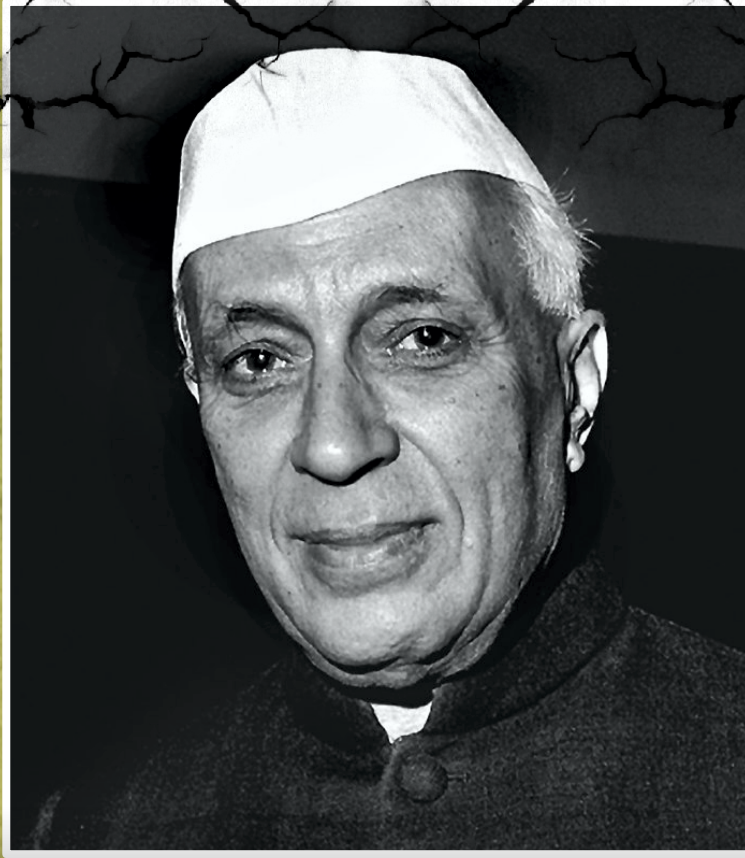
January 1989 to July-Aug, 2026

Total Killings*	96,502
Custodial Killings	7,421
Civilians Arrested	184,675
Structures Destroyed/Damaged	110,614
Women Widowed	22,993
Children Orphaned	108,011
Women Gangraped/Molested	11,285

* Including custodial killings

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

UNFULFILLED PLEDGES LOWER INDIA'S PRESTIGE ABROAD



“India will stand by her international commitments on the Kashmir issue and implement them at the appropriate time. The repudiation of international commitments would lower India's prestige abroad”.

(Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's
speech, as reported in The Times of India,
May 16, 1954)



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KASHMIR INSIGHT

JUL - AUG 2026

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KASHMIR'S

Demographic Question



Seven years after India revoked Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status, one of the most consequential questions surrounding the territory is no longer simply what changed politically, but what may be changing demographically.

The debate has often been framed in sharply opposing terms. Critics of New Delhi's post-2019 policies warn of demographic engineering, while the BJP-led Indian government maintains that the changes are intended to bring greater integration, equal rights and economic opportunity. Between these competing narratives, however, lie official figures that deserve closer scrutiny.

As of August 2026, 9 million domiciles have been issued by IIOJK administration including 800,000 domiciles to non-Kashmiris alone. The significance of the figure lies precisely in the legal change it represents.

The transformation did not stop with domicile rules. In October 2025, the authorities informed the IIOJK Assembly that 631 non-residents had purchased 386 kanals of land across the occupied Kashmir since 2019, for a combined consideration of nearly Rs130 crore. Of these, 378 outsiders acquired land in the Jammu region and 253 in Kashmir.

Before 2019, the legal framework governing permanent residency and land ownership gave local residents protections that distinguished IIOJK from most other parts of India. The post-2019 framework has altered those protections and opened new avenues for people from outside the territory to acquire domicile status and, subject to applicable restrictions, property.

That is why the demographic question cannot be reduced either to a claim that “nothing has changed” or to an assertion that demographic transformation has already been completed. Rather, the steps taken by the Indian government have set the course for a sustained process of demographic engineering in the occupied territory, whose full consequences are likely to unfold over time.

The more important question is what these legal changes could mean over time for land,

employment, political representation, cultural identity and the balance between local and non-local populations.

Demography is not changed overnight. It changes incrementally through laws, migration, property ownership, employment patterns and political representation.

Seven years after 2019, the available official data may not yet demonstrate a completed demographic transformation. They do, however, point to the beginning of a significant demographic shift: the legal and institutional barriers that once restricted the participation of non-residents in Jammu and Kashmir's economic and civic life have been substantially dismantled. These changes have effectively laid the groundwork for a broader process of demographic transformation, the full implications of which may become increasingly evident over time.

Whether these changes ultimately occupied Kashmir's demographic character will depend not merely on the number of certificates issued today, but on who is permitted to settle there, who acquires and controls land, who secures employment and economic opportunities, and who exercises political influence in the years ahead. The measures introduced by the Indian government since 2019 have progressively weakened the legal and institutional safeguards that had distinguished IIOJK from other parts of India, while treating the territory increasingly as an ordinary administrative unit rather than a disputed territory whose final status remains contested. From this perspective, the changes are not simply administrative or legal adjustments; they risk creating conditions in which settlement, land ownership, employment and political participation could gradually alter the region's demographic and political character, with consequences that may extend well beyond the immediate statistics and reshape the balance of the territory over time.

KASHMIR'S MEMORY UNDER SIEGE

The scrutiny of books in libraries and educational institutions in IIOJK, is meant to restrict access to histories which is a risk of narrowing intellectual space and reshaping how generations understand their past

For centuries, libraries have served as guardians of memory. They preserve the stories societies tell about themselves, their struggles, conflicts, achievements and contradictions. But in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), where history itself remains deeply contested, books have increasingly become the centre of a broader debate over knowledge, identity and power.

The decision to conduct a comprehensive audit of books across Jammu and Kashmir followed objections raised by members of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over the content of two publications. Subsequently, the authorities in IIOJK ordered the removal of the books from circulation after they had already been supplied to more than 250 schools across the region. The directions were issued after



The latest Indian government-ordered audits of books and digital archives in public libraries and educational institutions have renewed concerns among writers, academics and civil society groups that the region's intellectual spaces are facing unprecedented scrutiny. New Delhi claims such measures are intended to identify material considered supportive of extremism, violence or narratives that threaten public order. But in reality the excessive control over reading material risks transforming libraries from places of inquiry into instruments of ideological regulation.

two books were withdrawn and eight officials of the school education department were suspended early in the month of July over allegations that two textbooks distributed in government school libraries "glorified" pro-freedom figures. The police filed an FIR under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in the case on July 4, 2026. The two publications that became the focus of official scrutiny were *Personalities and Legends of Jammu and Kashmir*, authored by Hilal Ahmad and Santosh Meena and published by Oberoi Book Service, Jammu and Kashmir, and *Great Personalities of*

Jammu and Kashmir, written by Dr Sushant Giri and published by Anurag Prakashan, New Delhi. Both titles had been supplied to schools across the region through the government-funded Samagra Shiksha education programme.

The 240-page volume, *Personalities and Legends of Jammu and Kashmir*, is divided into five chapters and profiles a wide range of figures from the region, including politicians, activists, writers, poets and historians. The book also features internationally recognised personalities such as author Hari Kunzru, along with Farah Pandith, who became the first US special representative to Muslim communities.

However, the inclusion of prominent Kashmiri Hurriyat leaders in the publication drew objections from IIOJK authorities and members of the BJP, who questioned their portrayal in the book.

One of the entries that drew criticism was the profile of the late iconic Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Gilani, including his position that Kashmir was a “disputed region awaiting political resolution under the aegis of the United Nations”.

The publication also features a profile of Masarrat Alam Bhat, the chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, who has remained imprisoned following his arrest during the security clampdown in 2019.

Another entry that attracted criticism was that of Maqbool Bhat, a Kashmiri Hurriyat leader who was martyred in 1984 after being sentenced to death by an Indian court. The book's description of Bhat as a “martyr” became a particular point of contention for critics.

The controversy emerged against the backdrop of a broader crackdown on books in Jammu and Kashmir, including the banning of several publications in 2025. In that action, 25 books were prohibited, including works by prominent jurists, academics, journalists and internationally recognised writers such as A.G. Noorani, Sumantra Bose and Arundhati Roy.

Following the ban orders, police conducted searches at more than a dozen bookshops to enforce the removal of the prohibited titles from circulation. Earlier, authorities had also restricted books written by Abul A'la Maududi, the influential 20th-century Islamic scholar who founded Jamaat-e-Islami, an organisation that has been banned in IIOJK.

The measures triggered debate among academics, publishers and advocates of free expression, who argued that restricting access to books could limit

scholarly research and prevent students from engaging with complex historical, political and social questions.

During the enforcement drive, police confiscated at least 668 books from several bookshops in Srinagar in February 2025. The seized books were mostly published by New Delhi-based Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, which is affiliated with the Indian branch of one of the largest Islamic and political organizations in the Indian subcontinent, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind.

The Indian government's action is nothing but a form of intimidation aimed at criminalising the reading and possession of certain books.

“Even if there's objectionable content here and there, how does that matter? After all, books are not bombs,” journalist and author Anuradha Bhasin told Al Jazeera. “When was the last time someone read a book and chose to pick up a gun?”

Bhasin's own work, *The Dismantled State*, was among the 25 books prohibited in 2025.

Political scientist Sumantra Bose, whose books *Kashmir at the Crossroads: Inside a 21st-Century Conflict* (2021) and *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka* (2007) were also included in the banned list, criticised the latest developments as “absurd”.

“If an authority wants to spend inordinate time, energy and resources looking for needles in not one but a million haystacks, that's their choice. I personally don't think it's a sensible path, nor will it yield the desired result,” Bose told Al Jazeera.

The issue extends beyond individual titles. The critics describe the wider process as a struggle over collective memory, what some scholars call “**memoricide**”: the deliberate weakening or erasure of a community's historical memory by controlling the narratives available to future generations.

The term has been used in academic discussions of societies where political authorities attempt to reshape public understanding of the past by limiting access to archives, cultural materials and historical accounts. In Kashmir, the growing focus on books represents a deeper contest over who has the authority to define history.

The overpolicing of books suggests that Kashmiris are being rendered incapable of understanding their own condition as the first step towards their physical erasure as a people.

The restriction of access to certain writings does not simply remove books from shelves, it affects how young people engage with history, politics and identity.

Date	Work	Author
2025	<i>Human Rights Violations in Kashmir</i>	Piotr Balcerowicz and Agnieszka Kuszewska
2025	<i>Kashmiris Fight for Freedom</i>	Mohammad Yosuf Saraf
2025	<i>Colonizing Kashmir: State-Building under Indian occupation</i>	Hafsa Kanjwal
2025	<i>Kashmir Politics and Plebiscite</i>	Dr. Abdul Gockhami Jabbar
2025	<i>Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora?</i>	Essar Batool & others
2025	<i>Mujahid ki Azan</i>	Imam Hasan Al-Bana Shaheed, edited by Maulan Mohammad Enayatullah Subhani
2025	<i>Al Jihadul fil Islam</i>	Moulana Moudadi
2025	<i>Independent Kashmir</i>	Christopher Snedden
2025	<i>Resisting Occupation in Kashmir</i>	Haley Duschinski, Mona Bhan, Ather Zia and Cynthia Mahmood
2025	<i>Between Democracy & Nation: Gender and Militarisation in Kashmir</i>	Seema Kazi
2025	<i>Contested Lands</i>	Sumantra Bose
2025	<i>In Search of a Future: The Story of Kashmir</i>	David Devadas
2025	<i>Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War</i>	Victoria Schofield
2025	<i>The Kashmir Dispute: 1947–2012</i>	A G Noorani

Date	Work	Author
2025	<i>Kashmir at the Crossroads: Inside a 21st-Century Conflict</i>	Sumantra Bose
2025	<i>A Dismantled State: The Untold Story of Kashmir after Article 370</i>	Anuradha Bhasin
2025	<i>Resisting Disappearance: Military Occupation & Women's Activism in Kashmir</i>	Ather Zia
2025	<i>Confronting Terrorism</i>	Edited by Maroof Raza
2025	<i>Freedom in Captivity: Negotiations of belonging along Kashmiri Frontier</i>	Radhika Gupta
2025	<i>Kashmir: The Case for Freedom</i>	Tariq Ali, Hilal Bhatt, Angana P. Chatterji, Pankaj Mishra and Arundhati Roy
2025	<i>Azadi</i>	Arundhati Roy
2025	<i>USA and Kashmir</i>	Dr. Shamshad Shan
2025	<i>Law & Conflict Resolution in Kashmir</i>	Piotr Balcerowicz and Agnieszka Kuszewska
2025	<i>Tarikh-i-Siyasat Kashmir</i>	Dr. Afaq
2025	<i>Kashmir & the Future of South Asia</i>	Edited by Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal

It is a deliberate attempt to alter facts about the past and forcibly change people's perception of their own lived experiences. The government wants young Kashmiris to have no way to understand their own condition and to 'normalise' its own control.

The controversy over books in Kashmir is not new. For decades, literature, history and political writings have played a significant role in shaping public debates in the region. Books have documented competing interpretations of Kashmir's past, including accounts of political movements, conflicts, identity and governance.

Academic environments require exposure to diverse viewpoints, including controversial ones. The students and researchers cannot develop critical thinking if access to historical material is limited by political considerations and that what the Narendra Modi led Bharatiya Janata Party wants to achieve. Libraries, are not simply storage spaces for books; they are institutions where societies examine difficult questions. Removing controversial material, may prevent debate rather than resolve disagreements. The 2025 book restrictions brought these tensions into sharper focus. While the authorities justified

action against certain publications on security grounds, the broader use of loosely defined categories such as “objectionable” content can create uncertainty over the boundaries of legitimate scholarship, publishing and educational inquiry. The issue therefore extends beyond the removal of individual titles to the wider message conveyed by such restrictions: that particular subjects, interpretations or areas of historical and political inquiry may carry consequences.

The implications are particularly significant for education. The study of history, politics, sociology and international relations depends on access to diverse sources and competing interpretations. Understanding complex conflicts requires students to examine differing accounts, assess evidence and distinguish between fact, interpretation and political argument. Restricting the range of available material can narrow that intellectual field, leaving students with a less complete basis on which to examine the history and politics of their own region.

In this context, the removal of books is not simply a question of what remains on a library shelf. It can also influence the range of questions that can be asked,

the sources available for research and the perspectives through which future generations encounter contested episodes of history. Academic inquiry does not require acceptance of every argument contained in a book; rather, it requires the freedom to examine, compare and critically assess competing ideas.

Restrictions on reading material can also affect research. Scholars working on Kashmir's history and politics often rely on archives, memoirs, political writings and contemporary accounts to understand how different communities experienced major events.

When such sources become unavailable, the ability to conduct independent research becomes more difficult.

The controversy over books in Kashmir has unfolded at a time when information control, digital governance and public memory have become increasingly central to debates about freedom of expression. The latest scrutiny of libraries and educational institutions has expanded the discussion beyond individual books, raising broader questions about who decides what societies are allowed to read, study and remember.

The censorship, the control of books is rarely limited to the removal of physical copies from shelves. It also shapes the boundaries of public discussion by influencing which ideas are accessible to students, researchers and ordinary citizens.

In IIOJK, where competing narratives of history and politics have existed for decades, the debate over books has taken on an especially sensitive dimension.

The Indian action against the books dealing with Kashmir's political history, human rights, identity and conflict seems more to be through a security lens rather than an academic one. New Delhi is treating historical and political literature primarily as a security concern risk thus weakening spaces for research and intellectual debate.

The debate intensified in 2025 after authorities moved against a number of books that they alleged contained material supporting pro-freedom narrative, extremism or narratives considered harmful to national security.

In August 2025, a notification was issued by Chandraker Bharti, Principal Secretary of the [Jammu and Kashmir Home Department](#) to the aforementioned books.

The action sparked criticism from writers, academics and free-expression advocates who questioned whether banning books was an effective way to

counter radicalisation or whether it risked restricting legitimate scholarship.

Libraries have traditionally been viewed as institutions that preserve collective memory. They contain not only information but also the record of how communities have understood themselves across generations.

Thus the removal or restriction of books is a matter extending beyond censorship and it seems to be a ploy by New Delhi to control access to historical materials to influence how younger generations understand their society's past.

At the centre of the debate is the question of academic freedom, the principle that scholars, teachers and students should be able to explore ideas without undue interference.

Universities and research institutions around the world generally recognise that academic progress depends on open inquiry. Scholars argue that understanding conflicts, political movements and social changes requires access to diverse sources and competing viewpoints.

When access to certain materials is restricted the consequences extend beyond classrooms. It can affect historians, journalists, students and future generations seeking to understand the past. Thus this censorship can create intellectual gaps. If certain perspectives disappear from libraries and archives, future researchers may find it difficult to reconstruct how people experienced particular periods of history.

International human rights frameworks recognise freedom of expression and access to information as fundamental rights, while also allowing restrictions under specific circumstances, including threats to public safety and security.

The debate over books in Kashmir also raises questions under international human rights law, particularly regarding freedom of expression, access to information and academic freedom. Although international law recognises that governments may impose certain restrictions in the interests of national security or public order, such limitations are generally expected to be lawful, necessary, proportionate and subject to independent oversight.

Article 19 of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** affirms that "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression", including the freedom "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers." The same principle is reflected in Article 19 of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**, to which India is a State Party. While

the Covenant permits restrictions on expression under limited circumstances including the protection of national security and public order international human rights bodies have consistently maintained that such restrictions should not unnecessarily interfere with legitimate academic inquiry or the exchange of ideas.

The **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)** further recognises education as a process directed towards "the full

individual books and touches upon wider questions concerning academic freedom, historical inquiry and the ability of future generations to examine competing interpretations of the region's past. International human rights law does not prohibit governments from addressing material that directly incites violence or hatred. It does, however, place a high value on intellectual freedom, pluralism and access to information. The enduring challenge for societies confronting conflict is therefore not merely



development of the human personality", a principle many education specialists interpret as requiring access to diverse sources of knowledge rather than exposure to a single official narrative.

UNESCO has repeatedly described libraries as institutions that safeguard cultural diversity, intellectual freedom and access to knowledge. The **UNESCO Public Library Manifesto** characterises the public library as a gateway to knowledge that should enable citizens to make informed decisions and participate fully in democratic society. Scholars argue that restricting access to historical literature may therefore affect not only education but also the preservation of cultural memory.

It is within this broader legal and educational framework that the recent audits in occupied Jammu and Kashmir extends beyond the withdrawal of

how to protect security, but how to do so without diminishing the freedoms that education and scholarship are intended to preserve.

The future of Kashmir's intellectual landscape may depend not only on what books remain on library shelves, but also on whether institutions can preserve space for informed debate, critical thinking and historical inquiry.

Because ultimately, battles over books are rarely only about paper and ink. They are battles over memory, identity and the right of societies to understand their own stories.

HUMAYUN AZIZ SANDEELA

The author is an Islamabad
-based journalist.



Political Rights Cannot be Replaced by Development: APHC LEADER MAHMOOD AHMAD SAGHAR

Seven years after India's August 2019 constitutional changes, senior All Parties Hurriyat Conference leader Mahmood Ahmad Saghar argues that Kashmir's fundamental political question remains unresolved. In this interview, he discusses the impact of the post-2019 changes on the region's political, constitutional and social landscape, raising concerns over civil liberties, demographic and administrative changes, restrictions on political expression and the recent scrutiny of books and educational material. While acknowledging Kashmiris' aspirations for development, he maintains that infrastructure, investment and tourism cannot substitute for political rights and fundamental freedoms. Saghar calls for sustained India-Pakistan dialogue, meaningful participation of Kashmiri representatives, independent human-rights monitoring and a political settlement based on the aspirations and consent of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

KI: Seven years after the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, how would you describe the political, constitutional and social changes in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir? Does the ground reality correspond to what New Delhi promised?

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar: In my view, the action taken on August 5, 2019 was not merely a constitutional amendment but a fundamental unilateral alteration of Jammu and Kashmir's political and constitutional status. The state was subsequently divided into two

Union Territories, with a substantial share of powers becoming concentrated in New Delhi. The fundamental question remains whether the Kashmiri people gave their free political consent to this process.

New Delhi presents development, investment, tourism and infrastructure as achievements, but development cannot be a substitute for people's political rights and fundamental freedoms. In 2026, questions concerning human rights and democratic rights remain, while a human rights forum has recently called for the restoration of full statehood and a review of the 2019 reorganisation law.

We believe the Kashmir issue is fundamentally political and cannot be resolved by treating it merely as an administrative or economic matter.

KI: How do you view the recent audits of books, libraries and educational institutions and the removal of certain publications?

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar: We must recognise the need to prevent violence, extremism and material promoting hatred in the name of security. However, removing a book simply because it refers to a controversial political figure, movement or historical event sets a dangerous precedent for academic freedom.

The process, which began in schools in July 2026, has extended to colleges, universities and public libraries, with journals, research papers, theses and digital collections also coming under review.

The history of Kashmir is already deeply contested. If one particular historical narrative is officially deemed legitimate





while another is declared unfit for study, this ceases to be merely a security policy and can become an attempt to reshape historical memory.

KI: Where should the balance lie between security and freedom of expression?

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar: The principle should be very clear: incitement to violence can be prevented, but history, politics and dissent cannot be suppressed.

Educational institutions are places for questioning, research and understanding different perspectives. If students are allowed to study only an official narrative while alternative historical or political material is removed as “objectionable”, that is not education but an attempt at intellectual conditioning. We are not saying that every book must necessarily be available everywhere. We are saying that any restriction on a publication should be based on a clear, transparent and independent legal review, and that students and researchers have a right to understand different perspectives.

KI: Are changes to land, domicile and administrative laws altering Kashmir's demographic, political and cultural character?

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar: This is a fundamental concern among the people of Kashmir. Changes to domicile and other laws after 2019 have created apprehensions among local people about the future

of employment, land, resources and political representation. The United Nations human rights system has also recorded concerns regarding domicile laws and other legislation introduced after 2019.

We believe that in a disputed territory, fundamental legal and administrative changes that could affect its population, land and political authority should not be introduced without the genuine political consent of its people.

Kashmir is not merely a question of land; it is also about the identity, history, rights and future of the people who live there.

KI: New Delhi cites infrastructure, tourism and investment as indicators of development. Can economic development substitute for the political question?

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar: We are not opposed to development; we support it. The people of Kashmir deserve better roads, employment, education, healthcare, tourism and investment.

But economic development and political rights are two separate questions. If a person has a better road but no right to have a say in their political future, the fundamental political issue does not disappear.

History shows that lasting peace cannot be achieved through economic packages alone. Justice, political inclusion, respect for human rights and recognition of people's aspirations are the foundations of sustainable peace.

KI: What is the Kashmiri youth experiencing today, and how have the post-2019 changes affected their identity and political outlook?

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar: Kashmiri youth are growing up in a complex environment. They want modern education, technology, employment and engagement with the wider world, but they also have questions about their history, identity and political future.

We must understand that viewing young people solely through a security lens makes the situation more complicated. They need to be heard, their questions answered and space provided for peaceful political expression.

I believe that if young people are given access to education, employment, freedom of expression and peaceful political participation, they can become not part of the conflict but an essential part of its peaceful

resolution.

KI: How would you assess the current state of civil liberties and democratic space?

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar: Our concerns remain. Detentions, surveillance, restrictions on expression, action against journalists and political activists, and limited opportunities for political activity raise serious questions about the health of the democratic environment.

The UN human rights office has previously expressed concern over restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and political activity in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as arbitrary detention and other human rights issues.

Our position is that security and human rights are not mutually exclusive. Genuine security is built on public confidence, the rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms.

KI: Has the international community effectively turned away from the Kashmir issue?

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar: It would be incorrect to say that Kashmir has been completely forgotten internationally. However, it is fair to say that international attention and diplomatic activity have remained inadequate in relation to the seriousness of the dispute.

We believe the United Nations must not abandon its responsibility. The Kashmir issue is not simply a bilateral disagreement between India and Pakistan; it also concerns the political future and right to self-determination of millions of Kashmiris.

We call on the United Nations, European Union, Britain, the United States and other influential countries to encourage India and Pakistan to engage in meaningful dialogue and, at the same time, ensure that Kashmiri political leadership is included in the process.

Past experience has demonstrated that no lasting solution to Kashmir can be achieved by keeping the Kashmiri people outside the negotiating process.

KI: If you could deliver one message each to Narendra Modi, the Government of Pakistan and the international community, what would it be? And what is your roadmap for resolving the Kashmir issue?

Mahmood Ahmad Saghar: My message to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is this: political sentiment and a people's historical rights cannot be extinguished through force. India should choose the path of political engagement rather than confrontation, release political prisoners, restore fundamental freedoms and initiate meaningful

political dialogue with the Kashmiri people. Kashmir must be recognised as a political dispute rather than treated solely as a law-and-order issue.

My message to the Government of Pakistan: Pakistan should continue to highlight the Kashmir issue consistently and effectively on diplomatic, political and human rights fronts. At the same time, it should insist that genuine Kashmiri political leadership be included in any meaningful negotiating process. The resumption of direct talks between Pakistan and India is also essential.

My message to the international community: Kashmir should not be remembered only when a crisis erupts. There must be sustained diplomatic efforts to address the underlying causes of the dispute. The United Nations and major powers should play an active role in human rights monitoring, confidence-building and political dialogue.

Our roadmap would include:

- An immediate and sustained ceasefire and de-escalation between India and Pakistan.
- The resumption of comprehensive and continuous dialogue between the two countries.
- An acceptable negotiating framework that provides meaningful participation for the Kashmiri people and all relevant political forces.
- The release of political prisoners and the creation of an environment conducive to political activity, independent media and freedom of expression.
- Independent and transparent monitoring of the human rights situation.
- Greater movement, trade and people-to-people contact across the Line of Control.
- A credible, transparent and phased process towards a final political settlement, based on the consent of all parties.

Finally, my message is simple: the Kashmir issue cannot be resolved through guns, coercion or unilateral decisions. Its resolution must come through dialogue, justice, human dignity and respect for the genuine political aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

We call on India and Pakistan to move beyond the hostilities of the past. The people of the subcontinent need peace, development and a dignified future, not perpetual confrontation. Instead of turning Kashmir into a theatre of conflict, making it a bridge for peace would serve the best interests of the entire region.

THANK YOU, AMBASSADOR GOR— BUT KASHMIR'S BEAUTY SHOULD NOT ECLIPSE ITS HISTORY

Let me begin by thanking U.S. Ambassador to India Sergio Gor for visiting Srinagar and for recognizing what generations of travelers, writers, diplomats and ordinary visitors have experienced: Kashmir is extraordinarily beautiful.



On August 19, 2026, during his first visit to Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Ambassador Gor described the region as “an important part of India” and called it “an incredibly beautiful place.” His remarks came after his meeting with IOJK Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. He also indicated that Washington would review its travel advisory for the region.

On the second point, there can be little disagreement. Kashmir's valleys, lakes, mountains, forests and extraordinary landscapes have inspired descriptions of the region as a paradise on earth. Its natural beauty is not merely a matter of political interpretation. It is something visitors experience directly.

But precisely because Kashmir is so beautiful, its history deserves to be remembered with equal care.

Ambassador Gor is hardly the first distinguished American to be captivated by Kashmir. Adlai Stevenson visited Kashmir and met Sheikh Abdullah, grandfather of Omar Abdullah. Historical accounts record the impression the region made upon him.

Yet when American diplomats and statesmen addressed Kashmir officially, they generally understood that their

words carried consequences far beyond the moment in which they were spoken. Kashmir was not simply a beautiful destination; it was, and remains, one of the most sensitive questions in South Asian diplomacy. That distinction matters.

In 1962, U.S. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson told the Security Council that the larger interests of South Asian peace and security required a settlement of Kashmir and that the issue could not be resolved unilaterally by either India or Pakistan. He emphasized agreement, compromise and consideration of the freely expressed will of the people concerned.

That was not a statement about scenery. It was diplomacy addressing a dispute whose consequences extended beyond the borders of the territory itself.

The historical record of American engagement with Kashmir is extensive.

When the Kashmir dispute reached the United Nations in 1948, the United States voted for Security Council

Resolution 47, adopted on April 21, 1948. The resolution dealt with restoration of peace and order and contemplated a plebiscite concerning the future of Jammu and Kashmir.

The American position in the 1950s was also explicit. In a 1957 State Department record, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles reaffirmed that the United States regarded the prior United Nations decisions concerning a plebiscite as something that could not simply be disregarded unless the parties agreed upon another solution.

This history does not mean that American policy has remained frozen for nearly eight decades. It plainly has not. U.S. policy toward South Asia has evolved with changing circumstances, changing governments and changing strategic priorities.

But history remains relevant because diplomacy is built on precedents, records and carefully chosen language.

There is perhaps no better illustration than President George W. Bush. In February 2006, President Bush initially referred to a Kashmir settlement acceptable to “both sides.” He subsequently clarified his language and specifically stated that a solution should be acceptable to

“all sides,” explaining that this meant India, Pakistan and the people living in Kashmir.

That was an important diplomatic lesson: when words create an ambiguity on an issue of extraordinary sensitivity, responsible diplomacy does not hide the ambiguity. It clarifies it.

This is why Ambassador Gor's August 19 statement deserves thoughtful consideration rather than either celebration or condemnation.

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright also had a deeply personal connection to Kashmir through her father, Josef Korbel, who served as the Chairman of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP). Korbel's work on Kashmir became an important part of his diplomatic and intellectual legacy.

Albright's connection is a reminder of something larger: Kashmir has occupied a remarkable place in the history of American diplomacy, not merely as a picturesque Himalayan destination but as a question involving peace, security, international diplomacy and the political future of its people.

The same is true of the statements made over the years by successive American administrations.

President Donald Trump has repeatedly spoken about the Kashmir question and, at various points, offered U.S. assistance or mediation. He said on November 10, 2016, that if elected, he would be willing to play the mediator in addressing the “very, very hot tinderbox” of Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Then again, he said on July 22, 2019, that. “If I can help, I would love to be a mediator.” Then on May 10, 2025 “I will work with you both (India & Pakistan) to see if, after a 'thousand years', a solution can be arrived at concerning Kashmir.” Then on June 13, 2025 “I told them, India and Pakistan — they have a longtime rivalry over Kashmir — I said, I can solve anything,” he told reporters. “I'll be your arbitrator.”

It is clear that diplomatic language matters. Different parties can hear the same words very differently. This is not an argument for America to take India's side, Pakistan's side or any other side. It is an argument for America to remember its own diplomatic vocabulary.

Kashmir can simultaneously be a place of extraordinary natural beauty and a territory at the center of a longstanding political dispute. Recognizing one reality does not require denying the other.

It simply recognizes the historical record. The United Nations record cannot be wished away. Resolution 47 exists. The subsequent UN resolutions and UNCIP documents exist. The statements of American presidents, secretaries of state, ambassadors and military leaders exist. They are part of the diplomatic archive.

And I believe that archives of both UN and US diplomatic engagement matter. They matter because today's diplomats inherit yesterday's commitments, arguments and lessons. They matter because language used in a disputed region can have consequences far beyond the speaker's immediate intention.

Ambassador Gor therefore deserves thanks for coming to Kashmir and for appreciating its beauty. But perhaps Kashmir itself offers him—and all of us—a useful diplomatic lesson. Its mountains are permanent; political formulations are not. Its rivers cross boundaries; human aspirations do not always fit neatly within them. Its beauty belongs to everyone who sees it; its political future remains a question that diplomacy has wrestled with for generations.

The appropriate response, therefore, is neither to magnify one sentence nor to dismiss it. It is to use the moment as an opportunity to revisit the historical record and ask what lessons it contains for the future.

As Dr. Syed Nazir Gilani, an eminent jurist has suggested, Ambassador Gor's remarks can become an opportunity rather than an obstacle: an opportunity for Washington to revisit its own diplomatic archives and reconsider the depth of its historic engagement with the rights, security, dignity and political future of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

That would be constructive diplomacy.

The senior officials of the U.S. Department of State need not choose between appreciating Kashmir's beauty and remembering Kashmir's history. They can do both.

And perhaps that is the most diplomatic way forward: to strengthen U.S.-India relations, encourage peace between India and Pakistan, respect the sensitivities of all parties, and ensure that the people of Kashmir are not forgotten in conversations about the land they call home.

So, thank you, Ambassador Gor, for visiting Kashmir. Thank you for seeing its beauty. And now, as an American diplomat standing in a place where every word carries historical weight, I respectfully invite you to look once more—not only at Kashmir's magnificent mountains and valleys, but also at the diplomatic record that has surrounded them for nearly eight decades.

The beauty of Kashmir deserves to be celebrated. Its history deserves to be remembered. And its future deserves thoughtful, peaceful and responsible diplomacy.

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YOUM-E-ISTEHSAL KASHMIR: RALLIES, SEMINARS HELD ACROSS PAKISTAN IN SOLIDARITY WITH KASHMIRIS

Rallies, seminars and other events were held across Pakistan to mark Youm-e-Istehsal Kashmir, with participants reaffirming unwavering solidarity with the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and condemning India's illegal and unilateral actions of August 5, 2019.

A major solidarity rally was held on Constitution Avenue in Islamabad, attended by people from different walks of life. The rally was led by Federal

stability in South Asia.

In Karachi, a large solidarity rally was also held under the leadership of Sindh Minister for Labour and Human Resources Saeed Ghani. Addressing the gathering, Ghani reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support for the Kashmiri people's freedom movement and their right to self-determination. APHC-AJK leader Sheikh Abdul Mateen said August 5 serves as a reminder of India's illegal and unilateral revocation of IIOJK's special status in 2019,



Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir Muqam, Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, APHC-AJK Convener Ghulam Muhammad Safi and others.

Addressing the participants, Amir Muqam and other speakers paid tribute to the courage and resilience of the people of IIOJK, saying that despite India's continued repression and grave human rights violations had failed to weaken their resolve to secure their UN-recognized right to self-determination remains unshaken. They urged the international community to ensure implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir to promote lasting peace and

describing the move as a grave assault on political, constitutional and fundamental rights of the Kashmiri people. He urged the international community to press for implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions and facilitate a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of its people.

In Lahore, a solidarity rally was led by Punjab Minister for Housing Bilal Yasin, senior APHC-AJK leader Mahmood Ahmed Saghar, Hurriyat leaders Zahid Mujtaba, Engineer Mushtaq Mahmood and others. Bilal Yasin said India had failed to crush the Kashmiri people's freedom spirit despite resorting to brutal repression. Reaffirming Pakistan's support for

the Kashmir cause, he said the country would continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Kashmiri people. Mahmood Ahmed Saghar and other speakers described India's August 5, 2019 actions as blatant violations of international law and the UN Security Council resolutions, urging the international community to help resolve the Kashmir dispute in line with the UN resolutions and the

Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly, leaders of political and religious parties, APHC-AJK Information Secretary Imtiaz Wani, lawyers, students, civil society representatives and members of the public.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Amjad Hussain Azar said the Kashmiri people's struggle is a struggle for justice, truth and international law, and supporting it is a national responsibility of every



aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Similar solidarity rallies were held in Peshawar and Quetta. The Peshawar rally was led by Governor Faisal Karim Kundi along with APHC-AJK leaders Daud Yousafzai and Manzoor Ahmad Shah, while APHC-AJK leader Hassan Al-Banna represented the Kashmiri people at the Quetta rally.

At the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Taxila, a solidarity rally was organized in support of the people of IIOJK. The Vice Chancellor, Registrar, faculty members and a large number of students participated in the event, raising slogans in support of the Kashmiri people's freedom struggle and reaffirming that their sacrifices would never be forgotten.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, a seminar and a grand solidarity rally were held, attended by Chief Minister Amjad Hussain Azar, provincial ministers, members of the

Pakistani. He said India has failed to suppress the Kashmiris' aspiration for freedom through force and repression and urged the United Nations and the international community to implement the relevant UN Security Council resolutions to enable the Kashmiri people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. Imtiaz Wani described the Gilgit-Baltistan government's decision to officially observe Youm-e-Istehsal-e-Kashmir and bring all political forces together on one platform as a historic initiative.

Meanwhile, a rally was organized in Muzaffarabad under the joint auspices of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell and APHC-AJK. The rally was attended by APHC-AJK leaders Chaudhry Shaheen, Adeel Mushtaq Wani, Muhammad Shafi Dar, political and social figures, and a large number of citizens.

Carrying the flags of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and





Kashmir, the participants raised slogans against Indian occupation and in support of Kashmir's freedom. Addressing the rally, the speakers said India's August 5, 2019 actions, including the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, were aimed at changing the demographic composition of IIOJK in violation of international law and the UN Security Council resolutions. They said New Delhi has since issued millions of domicile certificates to non-locals



and deprived hundreds of Kashmiris of their properties and government jobs in an attempt to alter the territory's demographic character.

August 5, 2019: A defining turning point

August 5, 2019, stands as a defining moment in the modern history of IIOJK. On that day, the Indian government revoked the region's special constitutional status under Article 370 and ended the legal framework associated with it, amid heightened security deployments, sweeping restrictions and a communications blackout.

The move fundamentally altered the constitutional and administrative relationship between IIOJK and the Indian Union, triggering

political uncertainty, prolonged restrictions and widespread international concern. Pakistan condemned the decision as unilateral and contrary to established commitments concerning the Kashmir dispute.

More than six years later, the political, constitutional and humanitarian repercussions of August 5 continue to shape debate in South Asia. Pakistan observes the day annually as Youm-e-Istehsal Kashmir, reaffirming solidarity with the Kashmiri people and calling for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir disputed in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.



DECADES OF DENIAL:

DEATH CERTIFICATE FOR THE DISAPPEARED REOPENS IIOJK'S UNHEALED WOUNDS

After nearly three decades of uncertainty, relentless searching and prolonged legal battles, a court in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) finally declared Abdul Rashid Wani dead. The judgment, delivered in April 2026, brought legal closure to one family but also

officers privately advised them to accept the loss and move on.

One memory continues to haunt him. He recalls his grandmother pleading before an Indian Army officer who had come to their home: "Just give me my son back."



reopened one of the darkest chapters of Kashmir's modern history—the unresolved tragedy of enforced disappearances.

For Wani's son, Junaid Rashid, the court's decision was not a revelation. It merely confirmed what his family had painfully suspected for nearly twenty-nine years. He was only five years old when his father, a timber trader from Srinagar, was taken into custody by the Indian Army in July 1997 while travelling to pay suppliers. That evening, his wife and two young children waited, dressed to attend a wedding reception. He never returned.

For years, the family searched every possible avenue. They approached military camps, police stations, government offices and courts. They sold their family home to finance the search and legal proceedings. According to Junaid, they were even pressured to abandon their pursuit after army

Nearly three decades later, that plea remains unanswered.

After examining evidence, including a police investigation, the court concluded that Wani had been taken into custody by an Indian Army major, murdered while in custody and his body disposed of. It ordered the issuance of a death certificate—the first judicial declaration of its kind among thousands of disappearance cases in Kashmir.

Yet the ruling stopped short of providing what the family had sought for decades. It offered no explanation about where Wani's body was buried, nor did it bring anyone to justice.

While the judgment delivered legal recognition, it left the central questions unanswered.

Abdul Rashid Wani's story is not an isolated one. It mirrors the experiences of thousands of families whose relatives disappeared after being taken away

during military operations, raids or interrogations.

One such family is that of Manzoor Ahmed Dar, who was taken away from his home in Srinagar in 2002 during a midnight operation by Indian troops. His wife, Jana Begum, later recalled that it felt “like a bird of prey snatched him from us.” Despite years of protests, court proceedings and an identification parade in which she identified the officer she believed had detained her husband, the family never discovered his fate.

Eventually, after police privately informed them that Dar had died during interrogation, the family performed symbolic funeral rites in 2016. Yet they still do not know where his body lies.

His daughter, Bilkees Manzoor, summed up the anguish shared by countless Kashmiri families when she said that justice would only come when authorities revealed what had happened to her father and where his body had been buried.

Many other families continue to live in similar uncertainty, reluctant even to speak publicly because of fear of reprisals.

One of the most painful consequences of enforced disappearances has been the emergence of the “half-widows”—women whose husbands disappeared but whose deaths were never officially confirmed.

Unable either to remarry or to properly mourn, these women have spent decades living between hope and despair.

Fatima Begum of Bandipora is one such woman. Her husband Mansoor disappeared nearly twenty-five years ago, leaving her to raise her children alone amid severe financial hardship. Eventually she found work as a cleaner in a government school under a compassionate employment scheme.

Despite rebuilding parts of her life, the uncertainty surrounding her husband's fate has never disappeared.

The psychological and social consequences of enforced disappearances have therefore extended far beyond the missing individuals themselves, affecting generations of parents, spouses and children.

Human rights organizations have consistently argued that Abdul Rashid Wani's case reflects a much broader pattern of enforced disappearances in Kashmir.

The Srinagar-based Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) estimates that as many as 8,000 people have disappeared since the armed conflict escalated in 1989.

The People's Union for Democratic Rights, a civil

liberties group based in New Delhi, described Wani's judicial declaration of death as encapsulating Kashmir's broader human rights tragedy since military violence and mass uprising surged in 1989. According to the organization, his case symbolizes thousands of unresolved disappearances that have remained without accountability for decades.

Over the years, Kashmiri and international human rights defenders have repeatedly called for impartial investigations into these disappearances, emphasizing that justice remains impossible without truth and accountability.

The issue of enforced disappearances has become inseparable from another disturbing reality—the discovery of hundreds of unmarked and unidentified graves across different parts of Kashmir.

In 2009, the APDP documented approximately 2,700 unmarked graves in remote areas near the Line of Control.

Local residents told investigators they had buried bodies left behind by Indian forces, often without knowing the identities of the deceased.

One cemetery caretaker in Bimyar, Baramulla, told investigators he had personally buried at least 203 unidentified bodies brought by police from different parts of the Valley. According to the APDP, these bodies, many bearing bullet wounds, were buried as “unidentified militants” without any forensic identification or DNA profiling.

The organization called for exhumation, scientific DNA testing and comparison with samples from families searching for missing relatives.

Those demands remain largely unanswered.

Subsequent investigations by the then Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission confirmed the existence of 2,730 bodies buried at 38 locations. The commission acknowledged that many of those buried could be victims of enforced disappearances.

The commission recommended comprehensive DNA profiling to establish the identities of the deceased and match them with families searching for missing relatives. However, those recommendations have never been implemented.

The commission itself ceased functioning after the BJP-led Indian government revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status in August 2019.

Independent investigations by the International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice (IPT) uncovered another disturbing dimension of the disappearances crisis. The tribunal documented around 2,700 unknown and unmarked graves

containing the remains of 2,943 bodies across 55 villages in the districts of Bandipora, Baramulla and Kupwara. "These graves appeared at different times during the period of turmoil in Jammu and Kashmir between 1990 and 2010," said Khurram Parvez, the IPT's liaison officer in Kashmir. Notably, Parvez, who was imprisoned for years in India in connection with his human rights work in Kashmir, was recently released on conditional bail.

One case that drew particular attention originated at Panzalla Police Station in Kupwara district. Three families from Nadihal village in Baramulla reported that their sons—Mohammad (19), an apple grower, Riyaz (20), a herder, and Shahzad (27), a labourer—had disappeared after leaving home on April 28, 2010. As the families searched for answers, the case came to the attention of prominent human rights lawyer Parvez Imroz. His intervention eventually exposed what became later known as the Machil fake encounter case, a landmark case that brought attention to enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings and the existence of unmarked graves in Kashmir. Rights groups argue that these findings require an independent international investigation to establish the truth.

Other rights organizations, including APDP and Voice of Victims Jammu and Kashmir, estimate that more than 6,700 unmarked and mass graves exist across the Kashmir Valley and Jammu region.

Renowned Kashmiri rights activists, Abdul Qadeer Dar, Muhammad Ahsan Untoo and Kumar Wanchow said that the people missing in Kashmir since 1989 must be buried somewhere in the Valley as there were no whereabouts provided by the authorities about them.

Several Indian human rights defenders, including Gautam Navlakha, have similarly maintained that the scale of unmarked graves demands international attention and independent forensic examination.

Amnesty International has also urged India to conduct prompt, independent and transparent investigations into the unidentified graves and ensure justice for victims' families.

The official recognition of Abdul Rashid Wani's death has undoubtedly provided his family with a measure of legal closure. Yet closure without accountability offers little comfort to families who continue to search for truth.

The whereabouts of Wani's body remain unknown. No comprehensive process has been undertaken to identify victims buried in unmarked graves. Thousands of disappearance cases remain unresolved, while generations of Kashmiris continue

to bear the emotional, psychological and social consequences of decades-old crimes.

The passage of time has neither diminished the pain nor erased the demand for justice.

For thousands of families across Kashmir, the question remains unchanged: not merely whether their loved ones are dead, but where they are, what happened to them, and who will ultimately be held accountable.

Abdul Rashid Wani's death certificate may have formally closed one legal case after twenty-nine years, but it has also reopened one of Kashmir's deepest and most enduring wounds. Until enforced disappearances are independently investigated, unmarked graves scientifically examined, victims identified and those responsible brought to justice, the tragedy of Kashmir's disappeared will remain one of the region's most painful unresolved human rights legacies. death has undoubtedly provided his family with a measure of legal closure. Yet closure without accountability offers little comfort to families who continue to search for truth.

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RAIES MIR

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BLINDING THE NARRATIVE:

BOLLYWOOD'S GRIM APOLOGIA FOR THE PELLET GUN CHAUHAN IS, IN ESSENCE, ANOTHER PELLET FIRED, THIS TIME AT THE COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE OF THE INDIAN AUDIENCE

The annals of the Kashmir Valley are routinely defiled by the cruel ironies of state overreach, yet few chapters are quite as gruesome as that of the "pellet gun." This weapon, introduced under the sanitised, almost Orwellian euphemism of "non-lethal force," has written the most horrific pages of the region's contemporary history. It was never a tool of crowd control, it was a calculated stratagem that plunged an entire generation into perpetual

devastating frequency in 2016, in the occupied Kashmir Valley, the establishment assured the international community that this was a "humane" alternative to live ammunition.

The medical wards of Srinagar told a radically different story. The tiny lead and iron pellets discharged from these cartridges did not merely disperse crowds, they tore through flesh and permanently extinguished the gift of sight. There was

'PELLET GUNS: LIMITED DAMAGE'



darkness, shredding the dreams, futures, and physical existence of Kashmiri youth.

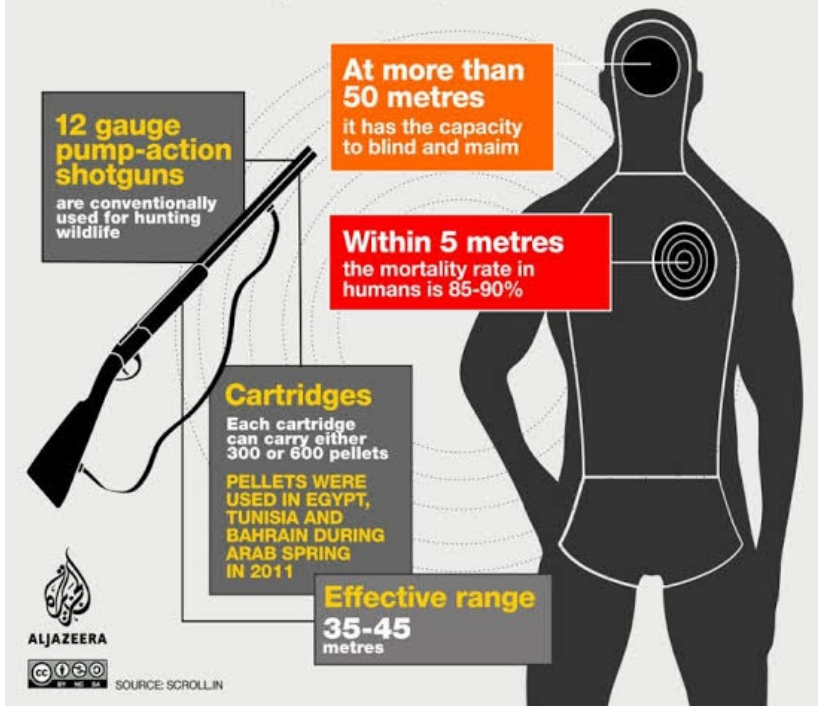
Yet, as the physical scars of this policy harden into historical trauma, we are confronted with an equally sinister sequel, the moral abdication of the Indian film industry. Enter Chauhan, Bollywood's latest cinematic apologia, which seeks with spectacular vulgarity to justify an affront to human conscience.

To understand the sheer cynicism of Chauhan, one must recall the reality it attempts to whitewash. When the muzzles of these modified shotguns were opened upon unarmed protestors in 2010 and with

not a hospital in the Valley that did not resemble a field infirmary, populated by twelve- and thirteen-year-old children lying in rows, their eyes tightly swathed in blood-soaked bandages.

Thousands of youth, women, and even infants in cradles fell victim to this shrapnel rain. Those who escaped total blindness were left permanently dependent, physically maimed, and psychologically shattered. Modern colonial history offers few parallels where a state has systematically and deliberately blinded an occupied populace to crush political dissent. It was an act of mass incapacitation

Anatomy of a pellet wound



disguised as law and order.

Packaging Cruelty as Patriotism

The contemporary ethos of Bollywood has long ceased to be an enterprise of art or genuine cinema. It has morphed into an ideological arm of the state, a highly lucrative machinery dedicated to appeasing



the ruling elite and marketing a majoritarian agenda to the masses. Chauhan is simply the latest cog in this propaganda wheel.

The film's narrative engine relies on a dangerous falsehood, it projects a "patriotic" Army official who

reluctantly but heroically resorts to the pellet gun to combat "anti-national elements." Audiences seated in the comfortable dark of multiplexes are fed a insidious message, the Kashmiri standing across the line is not a human being possessed of rights, but a target whose blinding is a geopolitical necessity.

Masquerading state cruelty as "tragic compulsion" or "glorious valor" has become Bollywood's newfound fixation. If previous ideological blockbusters laid the foundations of this animosity, Chauhan merely applies a fresh coat of plaster to the architecture of hate. It turns the mutilation of children into a popcorn spectacle.

The Incorruptible Court of History

The architects of this film operate under the delusion that blood spilled and eyesight stolen can be washed away by cheap scripts, jingoistic monologues, and a stirring background score. They are wrong. Cinema can veil the truth temporarily, but it cannot rewrite the ledger

of human suffering. In the final court of history, these filmmakers will stand in the exact same moral dock as the politicians who sanctioned the weapons.

The sterile hospital corridors of Kashmir, where young souls must now hold the hands of others just to take a few steps in the dark, remain infinitely more real, visceral, and permanent than any celluloid fiction Bombay can concoct.

Chauhan is, in essence, another pellet fired, this time at the collective conscience of the audience. It may well rake in millions at the box office and garner the frenzied applause of chauvinists, but it can never obscure the scars of Kashmir. It remains an indelible blot on the brow of a nation that boasts of its democratic credentials. The silver screen may be white, but the history Bollywood is writing upon it is dyed in the deepest, most unforgivable black.

MUKHTAR BABA

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WHEN CRIME CROSSES BORDERS FROM INDIA

U.S. Department of Justice's findings reveal how criminal syndicates operating from India have evolved into transnational networks, raising difficult questions about governance, institutional resilience and global security

Organised crime has long ceased to be a local law-and-order challenge. In the twenty-first century, criminal enterprises have evolved into multinational networks of violence, exploiting porous borders, encrypted communications, illicit financial systems and global migration to expand their reach. Governments increasingly confront criminal organisations whose influence extends far beyond the territories in which they originated,

US CHARGES BISHNOI, GOLDY BRAR IN NIJJAR MURDER CASE



making transnational organised crime one of the defining security challenges of the modern era.

The most significant revelation contained in the recent indictments unsealed by the U.S. Department of Justice is not merely that criminal syndicates operating from India have expanded overseas. Rather, it is that American prosecutors now describe them as "India-based transnational organized crime groups", a formulation that marks an important shift in how these networks are understood. According to the indictments, they are no longer viewed simply as domestic gangs with overseas associates, but as sophisticated criminal enterprises capable of coordinating extortion, narcotics trafficking, contract killings, witness intimidation and organised violence across multiple continents. That distinction elevates what was once regarded primarily as a national law-enforcement problem into an issue of international security, diplomatic concern and multilateral criminal justice cooperation.

It is against this backdrop that *Operation Hard Ball* assumes exceptional importance. The investigation, coordinated by the U.S. Department of Justice alongside law-enforcement agencies in Canada and Europe, represents one of the largest international

crackdowns on organised crime networks that have originated in India. According to federal prosecutors, 37 defendants were charged in three indictments, 24 individuals were arrested across multiple jurisdictions and 10 fugitives remain at large. Such figures illustrate the scale of organisations that, according to prosecutors, have developed command structures capable of directing extortion, narcotics trafficking, targeted violence and money laundering across several continents.

One indictment identifies Lawrence Bishnoi (33) as the leader of a criminal enterprise that prosecutors claim directed operations from India while maintaining networks in Canada, the United States and Europe. Also named are Satinderjeet Singh, alias Goldy Brar (32), Rohit Godara (37) and Sukhraj Singh Kang (58), whom prosecutors describe as senior members of the same organisation. The indictment alleges that the enterprise relied upon decentralised command structures, enabling associates in multiple jurisdictions to execute criminal activities while senior leadership remained outside the immediate reach of foreign law enforcement.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the indictment is its description of how the Bishnoi enterprise allegedly transformed violence into a calculated instrument of psychological control.

According to the Department of Justice, the organisation routinely targeted prominent religious, social and political figures, using high-profile attacks not only to eliminate perceived adversaries but also to cultivate fear among communities both within India and across the Indian diaspora. Prosecutors cite the June 2023 assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar a prominent Canadian Sikh leader in Surrey, British Columbia and further allege that, in November 2023, Bishnoi publicly claimed responsibility for a separate shooting at the Vancouver residence of a prominent Indian actor and singer. The indictment states that this claim was accompanied by a Facebook post in Punjabi warning, "*no one can save you from us.*" Far from being an isolated threat, prosecutors contend that

the organisation deliberately amplified such acts through social media, online videos and internet posts to magnify its reputation, intimidate potential targets and strengthen its extortion network. In this respect, the indictment portrays an organisation that allegedly understood the strategic value of digital communication as well as any modern terrorist or organised criminal enterprise: violence achieved its greatest effect not merely through the act itself, but through its instantaneous dissemination across digital platforms, where fear could travel faster than bullets and transcend national borders.

Perhaps the most disturbing feature of the indictments is not merely the geographical reach of these criminal enterprises but the allegations regarding their ability to operate despite the incarceration of their principal leaders. Federal prosecutors allege that Lawrence Bishnoi continued directing operations from an Indian prison using illicit mobile telephones, encrypted internet communications and trusted intermediaries. The indictments further allege that the organisation maintained an international hierarchy in which Goldy Brar coordinated North American operations while Rohit Godara oversaw activities extending into Europe. If these allegations are ultimately substantiated in court, they raise uncomfortable questions not simply about organised crime, but about institutional resilience in India. If substantiated, these allegations suggest that weaknesses in prison administration, law enforcement or broader governance in India may have enabled domestic criminal syndicates to evolve into enterprises with a global operational footprint.

The international ramifications of these indictments extend well beyond conventional organised crime. They intersect with one of the most serious diplomatic disputes between India and a Western democracy in recent decades. In September 2023, then Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told Parliament that Canadian security agencies were pursuing "credible allegations" linking agents of the Government of India to the killing of Canadian Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, British Columbia. India categorically rejected the accusation as "absurd" and "motivated", triggering an unprecedented deterioration in bilateral relations, including reciprocal diplomatic expulsions. In October 2024, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) publicly alleged that violent criminal networks, including the Lawrence Bishnoi group, had been used as proxies in campaigns involving intimidation, extortion and violence targeting

members of the South Asian community in Canada. The RCMP stressed that these allegations formed part of ongoing criminal investigations and did not constitute judicial findings. Nevertheless, the convergence of Canadian investigations and the U.S. Department of Justice's description of "India-based transnational organized crime groups" suggests that concerns surrounding such networks have evolved beyond ordinary criminality into matters of international diplomacy, national security and transnational law enforcement. Whatever the eventual outcomes of criminal proceedings, the episode demonstrates how organised crime, when alleged to intersect with geopolitics and diaspora politics, can profoundly reshape relations between democratic states.

A separate indictment focuses on Jaggu Bhagwanpuria (38), whom prosecutors claim heads another India-based transnational organised crime group with an estimated 1,000 members worldwide, including more than 100 members operating in the United States. According to the indictment, the organisation maintained networks extending across Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, illustrating the extent to which organised crime has become detached from national boundaries. Prosecutors further allege that elements within the enterprise exploited corrupt public officials in Punjab to facilitate extortion and manipulate criminal investigations—allegations that, if ultimately proven, would underscore the corrosive relationship between organised crime and institutional corruption.

The Department of Justice also identifies Ravinder Singh Dhanda, Jaskarn Baghri and Gurtej Singh Smagh as alleged organisers of a sophisticated cocaine and methamphetamine trafficking network linking Canada and the United States. Investigators contend that the organisation combined narcotics trafficking with money laundering and other organised criminal activities, demonstrating the increasingly diversified nature of modern criminal enterprises.

None of these allegations should be interpreted as judicial findings. They remain matters before the courts. Yet the indictments themselves are significant because they reflect an evolving assessment by one of the world's most experienced law-enforcement systems regarding the changing geography of organised crime.

The concerns raised by the U.S. Department of Justice also resonate with broader international assessments of organised crime. The Global

Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime's Global Organized Crime Index 2023 assigns India a criminality score of 5.75 out of 10, ranking it 61st among 193 countries, 21st in Asia, and the highest-scoring country in South Asia for organised criminality. The Index identifies particularly elevated risks in human trafficking, extortion, narcotics markets and financial crime, while also pointing to institutional vulnerabilities in political governance, judicial effectiveness and law enforcement resilience. Although the Index does not establish criminal liability or attribute responsibility to governments, it provides an independent international assessment suggesting that organised criminal markets operating from India have acquired a scale and sophistication that increasingly demand global attention.

This broader trend is neither unique nor unexpected. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has consistently warned that transnational organised crime now represents one of the principal threats to international governance, exploiting weak institutions, corruption and global financial connectivity. Likewise, Europol's Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) observes that contemporary criminal organisations increasingly function as fluid international networks rather than rigid hierarchical structures. Their operational model is defined not by territory but by connectivity, using encrypted communications, crypto currencies, digital financial systems and diaspora networks to coordinate criminal activity across jurisdictions.

The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) similarly argues that organised crime has entered an era of unprecedented adaptability. Criminal enterprises increasingly resemble multinational corporations, diversifying revenue streams, outsourcing operational tasks and exploiting disparities between legal systems. Geography no longer limits criminal influence; it merely determines where leadership resides.

Viewed against this global backdrop, Operation Hard Ball assumes wider significance. If the allegations are ultimately proven, they would illustrate how criminal syndicates operating from one jurisdiction can evolve into sophisticated transnational enterprises exhibiting precisely the organisational characteristics identified by UNODC, Europol and GI-TOC.

History demonstrates that organised crime rarely acquires such international reach in isolation.

Whether examining the Sicilian Mafia, the Camorra, Colombian cartels or Balkan criminal networks, expansion has often been facilitated by institutional weaknesses, inadequate financial oversight, corruption, ineffective witness protection, fragmented policing or deficiencies in international legal cooperation. Organised crime flourishes where governance gaps persist. It exploits institutional vulnerability long before it exploits international borders.

Against this comparative experience, the Department of Justice's characterisation of certain India-based transnational organized crime groups warrants close attention. It invites scrutiny not simply of individual criminal prosecutions but of the institutional conditions that enabled such organisations to expand beyond India's borders.

Taken together, the American indictments, Canada's parallel investigations and the growing engagement of international law-enforcement agencies underscore a broader transformation. Organised crime increasingly intersects with migration, diaspora politics, digital communications, illicit finance and international diplomacy, making it as much a governance challenge as a criminal justice one.

The broader lesson extends well beyond the indictments themselves. The evolution of criminal syndicates into what the U.S. Department of Justice now characterises as "India-based transnational organized crime groups" suggests that organised crime is not merely a policing problem but a measure of institutional resilience. When domestic criminal enterprises are allowed to consolidate, adapt and internationalise, they eventually outgrow the jurisdictions in which they originated, becoming threats not only to national governance but also to international peace, public security and the rule of law. The experience described in the DOJ indictments raises legitimate questions about whether India's criminal justice and prison administration were sufficiently equipped to prevent such syndicates from acquiring an international reach. For India, as for every country confronting organised crime, the ultimate test is not the ability to prosecute these networks after they have become global, but the institutional capacity to dismantle them before they evolve into transnational security threats.

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JULY 13, 1931:**THE TRAGEDY THAT CONTINUES TO SHAPE KASHMIR'S HISTORICAL MEMORY**

Every year on July 13, Kashmir commemorates one of the most significant events in its modern history. For Kashmiris, the date symbolises sacrifice and resistance against autocratic Dogra rule; for historians, it marks a watershed in the region's political awakening and the emergence of an organised movement for political, economic and civil rights.

The day is observed in memory of the Kashmiris who were killed outside Srinagar Central Jail by the troops of Dogra Maharaja on July 13, 1931, during

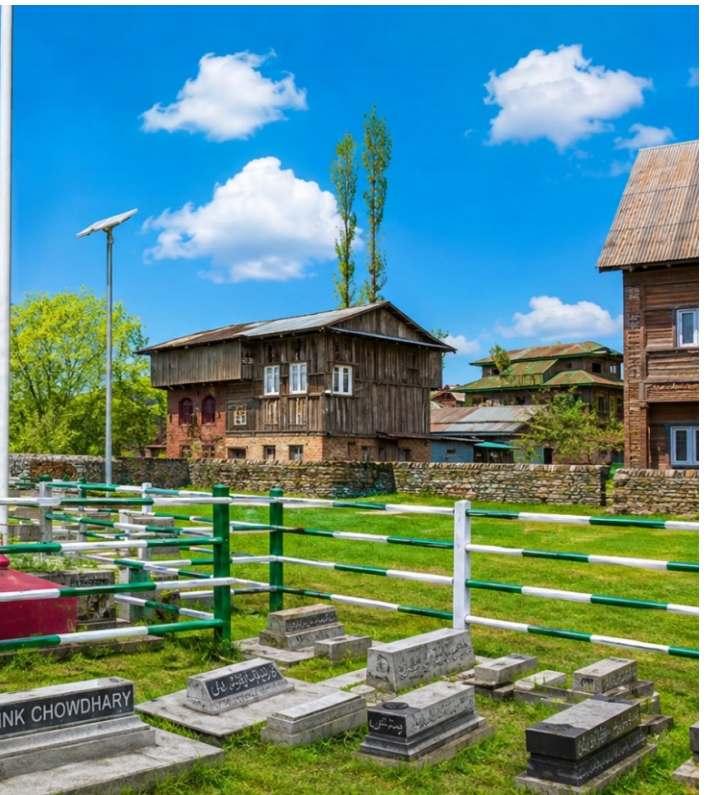
Kashmiris as the July 13 Martyrs' Day.

For generations, families, historians and community organisations have continued to commemorate the victims, describing their deaths as a defining moment in Kashmir's struggle for dignity, justice and political rights.

Background to the unrest

The events of July 1931 unfolded against the backdrop of decades of political, economic and social discontent under Dogra rule.

Historical accounts note that Kashmiri Muslims



the trial of Abdul Qadeer. The incident has since occupied a central place in Kashmir's historical narrative and continues to influence political discourse and public memory.

According to historical accounts, thousands of people gathered outside the Central Jail in Srinagar to witness Abdul Qadeer's trial. As the time for the Zuhr prayer approached, a young man stood to deliver the Adhan. Before he could complete the call to prayer, he was shot. Others stepped forward one after another to continue the Adhan and were also fired upon. By the end of the incident, 22 Kashmiris had lost their lives, an event remembered by

the trial of Abdul Qadeer. The incident has since occupied a central place in Kashmir's historical narrative and continues to influence political discourse and public memory. Large portions of agricultural produce were collected as revenue, while peasants exercised little control over the land they cultivated.

The administration also maintained the **begar**, or forced labour, system under which people were required to work with little or no remuneration. Taxes were imposed on numerous occupations and even certain aspects of daily life, adding to widespread resentment among sections of the population.

Several historians have argued that these economic grievances became closely intertwined with

demands for greater political representation and social justice.

The origins of Dogra rule date back to 1846, when, following the First Anglo-Sikh War, the British East India Company transferred Kashmir to Gulab Singh under the Treaty of Amritsar for 7.5 million Nanakshahi rupees. Historians have frequently described the treaty as a turning point that placed Kashmir under Dogra administration for the next century.

While Kashmiri Pandits generally enjoyed comparatively greater access to education and administrative employment, the Muslim majority remained underrepresented in government institutions, contributing to growing demands for political reform.

Language policy also underwent significant change.

where participants condemned the incident and demanded action against those responsible.

Among those attending one such gathering at Khanqah-e-Mualla was Abdul Qadeer. During his address, he reportedly raised slogans directed against the Dogra Maharaja's rule. He was arrested on charges of sedition, and as public interest in the case intensified, his trial was shifted from the court premises to Srinagar Central Jail.

The transfer itself triggered further demonstrations. On July 12, protests were held across Srinagar against the decision to conduct the trial inside the prison.

The shootings of July 13

The following day, thousands gathered outside the Central Jail.

As the hearing proceeded, the time for the midday prayer approached. According to widely cited historical accounts, one young man stood to call the Adhan but was shot before completing it. Others then stepped forward in succession, each attempting to continue the call before also being shot. By the end of the firing, 22 people had been killed. The incident became one of the defining moments of Kashmir's political history and is regarded by many historians as a turning point in organised political mobilisation in the region.



Urdu replaced Koshur (Kashmiri) as the official language, a move that many scholars argue further disadvantaged the predominantly Kashmiri-speaking Muslim population in education and administration.

Growing public discontent

Public dissatisfaction intensified during the early months of 1931.

On April 19, Imam Munshi Muhammad Ishaq was prevented from delivering the Eid sermon at Jammu's Municipal Park by Dogra Police Chief Chaudhry Ram Chand, prompting demonstrations across Jammu.

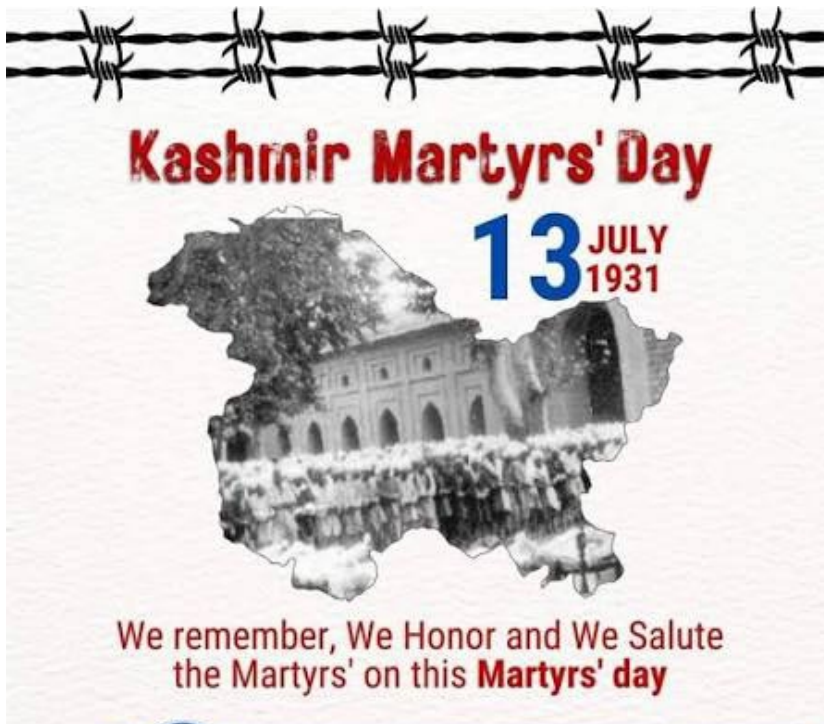
Shortly afterwards, reports of the desecration of the Holy Quran involving Dogra troops generated widespread public anger. Large public meetings were subsequently held at Srinagar's Jamia Masjid, Khanqah-e-Mualla and other religious centres,

Historical accounts

Although the number of those killed is generally accepted as 22, historical literature contains some variations.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, in *Aatash-i-Chinar*, refers to 22 fatalities but does not list their names. Political leader Munshi Mohammad Ishaq, an eyewitness to the events, similarly records 22 deaths in *Nida-e-Haq*.

Molvi Mohammad Ibrahim, writing in the *Koshur Encyclopedia* (Vol I, pages 350-351), published by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in 1986, identified all 22 victims by name and place of residence as under Amir Joo Jandgaroo (Gojwara), Akbar Dar (Osar Bhavan), Mohammad Teli (Osar Bhavan), Mohammad Subhan Rather (Osar Bhavan), Abdullah Ahangar



(Narabal Nowshehra), Abdullah Lone (Mokhte Pokhar), Mohammad Shaban Misger (Mokhte Pokhar), Khaliq Shora (Anzimar), Mohammad Sultan Chola (Aram Masjid Khanyar), Ahmad Bhat (Fateh Kadal), Mohammad Sultan Khan (Basant Bagh), Nasiruddin (Chinkral Mohalla), Abdul Salam Hajam (Guzarbal), Mohammad Akbar (Zaldagar), Ghulam Nabi Kanewal (Mohalla Pandan), Abdullah Najar (Ompora), Ghulam Mohammad Sofi (Daribal), Mohammad Subhan Khan (Nawab Bazar), Abdul Gani Makai (Nawa Kadal), Ghulam Mohammad Naqash (Kadi Kadal), Ghulam Mohammad Halwai (Jama Masjid) and Ghulam Qadir Bhat (Mohalla Bahauddin Sahib).

Pir Mohammad Afzal Makhdoomi, another political leader and eyewitness, recorded 23 fatalities in *Kashmir ki Tehreek-e-Azadi: Khwaab, Azaab, Saraab*, identifying an additional victim as Ghulam Rasool Dardah of Qutubuddin Pora.

Scholar Mridu Rai, in *Martyrs' Days: Memorializing 13 July 1931 in Kashmir*, refers to 22 demonstrators and one policeman killed during the disturbances but does not list the victims individually.

Late Plebiscite Front leader Sadrudin Mujahid later documented a broader series of casualties occurring between 1931 and 1938. According to his research, 20 people were killed outside the Central Jail on July 13, while six others died in separate incidents elsewhere in Srinagar on the same day.

These differing accounts illustrate the complexity of reconstructing historical events while also demonstrating broad agreement that July 13, 1931

marked a decisive moment in Kashmir's political evolution.

Legacy and historical significance

The aftermath of the shootings witnessed unrest in parts of the Valley. Historian and political thinker Prem Nath Bazaz observed that while the demonstrations originated as opposition to the Dogra administration, some subsequent disturbances took on a communal character when Hindu-owned shops were attacked at some places. Bazaz attributed these developments to political immaturity within sections of the movement and deteriorating relations between communities rather than to the original objectives of the protest.

Many scholars have since argued that reducing the events of July 13 solely to a religious confrontation overlooks their wider political, economic and social

context. The movement, they contend, was shaped by demands for civil rights, representative governance and relief from economic hardship as much as by religious grievances.

Historians also place the events within a longer tradition of resistance in Kashmir. One of the earliest examples was the 1865 Shawl Weavers' Uprising, or **Shelbaf Tehreek**, when artisans protested against heavy taxation and exploitative working conditions under the Dogra administration. Contemporary accounts suggest that at least 28 weavers were killed during the suppression of the protest, while many others drowned attempting to escape and more than 100 were injured.

For many researchers, the uprising represented one of the earliest organized labour movements in Kashmir and reflected long-standing economic grievances that continued to shape political mobilisation in subsequent decades.

More than nine decades later, July 13 continues to occupy a prominent place in Kashmir's historical memory. While interpretations of the events differ among historians, political leaders and communities, there is broad agreement that the shootings outside Srinagar Central Jail marked a pivotal episode in the region's modern history, influencing political consciousness and shaping debates that continue to resonate across generations.

(Kashmir Insight Review)

BEYOND DIPLOMACY: KASHMIR INDUS WATER & INT'L LAW

DIPLOMACY has the power to shape narratives, but it cannot erase history. Governments may celebrate political achievements on international podiums and declare disputes resolved through carefully crafted speeches, yet unresolved conflicts do not disappear simply because they are described differently. Kashmir remains one of those enduring realities. Despite repeated attempts to portray the region as a settled issue, it continues to occupy a place in international diplomacy, legal discourse and the global human rights debate. The question is no longer whether competing narratives exist, but whether political rhetoric can outweigh international law and the aspirations of the people most directly affected.

Pakistan has consistently maintained that the Kashmir dispute is neither an internal matter nor a closed chapter of history. It remains an internationally-recognized issue, reflected in relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions that call for a peaceful settlement. Islamabad argues that any lasting peace in South Asia must rest upon dialogue, respect for international law and the implementation of these resolutions rather than on unilateral political decisions.

Equally significant are the concerns repeatedly raised by international human rights organisations. Reports issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), together with assessments by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have documented allegations of prolonged detentions, communication blackouts, restrictions on freedom of expression and limitations on journalists and political activists in Indian-occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

Pakistan argues that these findings complicate India's portrayal of complete normalcy and warrant sustained international attention rather than diplomatic dismissal. The constitutional changes introduced after the revocation of Article 370 continue to generate legal and political debate. Pakistan maintains that altering the constitutional and administrative status of a territory whose final disposition remains disputed cannot substitute for a negotiated political settlement. It further argues that changes concerning land ownership and residency

have intensified concerns about the region's demographic and political future.

The growing dispute over the Indus Waters Treaty has added another dimension to already fragile relations between the two neighbours. For more than six decades, the treaty has survived wars and prolonged political hostility, making it one of the few enduring symbols of cooperation in South Asia. Pakistan contends that any unilateral attempt to suspend or weaken the treaty undermines international legal principles and threatens the water security of millions. The international seminar held in Islamabad on 30 June 2026 sought to reinforce this argument by presenting the treaty as an international legal obligation rather than merely a bilateral arrangement.

The seminar attracted notable international attention, reflecting Pakistan's effort to frame the issue within the broader context of international law, treaty obligations and regional stability. Pakistan also points to the continued support expressed by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which has repeatedly reaffirmed the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions. For Islamabad, this demonstrates that Kashmir continues to resonate beyond South Asia and remains a matter of international concern.

Ultimately, history has shown that political narratives may dominate headlines for a day, but unresolved disputes have a way of returning to the international stage until they are addressed with sincerity and justice. Lasting peace cannot be built on competing narratives alone, nor can diplomatic speeches replace meaningful political engagement. Whether the issue is Kashmir or the Indus Waters Treaty, durable stability will depend not on whose narrative is louder, but on whose actions are guided by international law, respect for human rights and a genuine commitment to dialogue.

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THE SILENT SIEGE OF MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS AMONG YOUNG WOMEN IN INDIAN-OCCUPIED JAMMU AND KASHMIR

In Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, protracted conflict has inflicted profound and enduring psychological wounds, particularly upon young women and adolescent girls. In Kashmir, women have been intimately involved in the conflict and continue to be victims of the continuous cycle of violence and abuse.

with 43.8% reporting symptoms compared to 24.1% of men. Notably, one-third of participants had contemplated suicide within the preceding month, underscoring the acute severity of the situation. Risk factors for women included witnessing killings, experiencing torture and economic dependency. The 2015 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Kashmir



As women and members of the community, they face psychological and physical abuse, displacement and disillusionment due to the ongoing conflict. Far from abstract geopolitical tensions, the lived realities of militarization, enforced disappearances, curfews and pervasive insecurity have precipitated a gendered mental health crisis marked by elevated rates of depression, anxiety and trauma-related disorders.

A comprehensive 2008 study published in *Conflict and Health*, drawing on community surveys in Kupwara and Budgam districts, found that 33.3% of respondents exhibited significant psychological distress. Women were disproportionately affected,

Mental Health Survey, one of the largest of its kind, revealed that approximately 45% of adults in the Kashmir Valley nearly 1.8 million individuals experienced mental distress. Among women, 50% showed probable depression (versus 37% of men), 36% probable anxiety disorders (versus 21% of men) and 22% met criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (versus 18% of men).

Recent research further highlights the gender dimensions. In her 2025 study, Aksa Jan examines the mental health of women in Kashmir, highlighting how decades of conflict responsible for over 90,000 deaths and thousands of enforced disappearances have amplified psychosocial stressors. Women,

often primary caregivers, contend with direct threats such as sexual violence, family losses and economic precarity. These experiences manifest in chronic depression, anxiety, somatic complaints and profound isolation, compounded by inadequate mental health infrastructure and cultural stigma that

Kashmiri women navigate aspirations for education and professional growth against the backdrop of communication blackouts, security lockdowns and normalized trauma. According to the 2011 census, Kashmir has only 45 specialized psychiatrists for a population of 12.5 million, which goes against the

World Health Organization's recommendation of at least three practicing psychiatrists per 0.1 million people. This underscores the government's insufficient provision of mental health care for the people.

This crisis constitutes a pressing women's rights imperative under international humanitarian and human rights frameworks. The failure to provide a d e q u a t e psychosocial support c o n t r a v e n e s obligations to ensure



discourages help-seeking. Jan emphasizes the urgent need for gender-sensitive support systems to address these intersecting vulnerabilities.

A 2020 chapter by Dar and Deb on the volatile situation in Kashmir reinforces these findings, linking ongoing instability to heightened prevalence of mental health disorders among the general population, with women facing unique socio-cultural pressures that intensify internalized trauma.

For young women and youth specifically, the consequences are particularly debilitating. Conflict-related disruptions to education, restricted mobility and repeated exposure to violence contribute to prevalence rates of depression ranging from 30% to 66% among those aged 15–25 in affected areas. Studies of adolescent females in tertiary care settings indicate that major depressive disorder underlies 44% of suicide attempts, with anxiety disorders and PTSD accounting for additional significant portions. High unemployment reported around 53% among women in some evaluations further entrenches feelings of entrapment and diminished agency.

The human cost extends beyond statistics. Young

the right to health, particularly for populations under occupation. The young women of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir deserve more than endurance in silence.

From losing loved ones to living in a violent and uncertain environment to living in the conflict, they have experienced extreme emotional and psychological stress. Women in Kashmir, particularly widows and half-widows, bear a huge burden in caring for their families as well as coping with their own pain. Studies have shown that they are susceptible to mental health conditions like depression, anxiety and PTSD because of their experiences with loss, bereavement and social pressures. Despite the widespread mental health crisis in Kashmir, access to services remains extremely limited.

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UN RESOLUTIONS ON JAMMU & KASHMIR

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been actively involved in the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) dispute since 1948, categorizing it under the agenda item "India-Pakistan Question." Over the years, the UNSC has passed more than a dozen resolutions aimed at addressing the conflict, with several key resolutions forming the backbone of international efforts to mediate this issue. Below is a brief overview of the most significant resolutions related to the J&K dispute.

UNSCR 38 (1948)

Adopted on January 17, 1948, this resolution was an initial response to the escalating conflict between India and Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir. It requested that the Security Council be kept informed of any material changes in the situation, emphasizing the need for immediate updates to avoid further escalation.

UNSCR 39 (1948)

Passed on January 20, 1948, UNSCR 39 established the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP). The primary role of the UNCIP was to investigate the situation on the ground and share factual reports with the Security Council. This marked the beginning of the UN's direct involvement in the Kashmir dispute.

UNSCR 47 (1948)

One of the most critical resolutions, UNSCR 47, was adopted on April 21, 1948. It called for the resolution of the J&K dispute through a democratic process, specifically "a free and impartial plebiscite." This resolution laid the foundation for the principle that the people of Jammu and Kashmir should determine their own future through a fair and transparent voting process.

UNSCR 51 (1948)

Adopted on June 3, 1948, this resolution emphasized the importance of resolving the J&K dispute to maintain international peace and security. It reinforced the necessity of finding a peaceful solution that aligned with the broader goals of global stability.

UNSCR 80 (1950)

On March 14, 1950, UNSCR 80 reaffirmed the principle that the final disposition of Jammu and Kashmir would be in accordance with the will of the people. This resolution reiterated the commitment to a free and impartial plebiscite, ensuring that the voices of the Kashmiri people would be heard.

UNSCR 91 (1951)

This resolution, adopted on March 30, 1951, was significant in that it stated that any decision taken by the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir regarding the state's future would not constitute

the final disposition of the territory. The resolution reinforced that any such decisions must align with the principles outlined in previous UNSC resolutions.

UNSCR 98 (1952)

Adopted on December 23, 1952, this resolution once again reaffirmed that the question of J&K's accession to either India or Pakistan would be decided through a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under UN auspices. It also outlined the maximum number of troops to be maintained by both India and Pakistan after demilitarization, in preparation for the plebiscite.

UNSCR 122 (1957)

This resolution, adopted on January 24, 1957, reiterated that any action by the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly to determine the state's future would not be recognized as the final disposition. The UNSC maintained that such decisions must comply with the earlier resolutions advocating a plebiscite.

UNSCR 1172 (1998)

Passed on June 6, 1998, following nuclear tests by both India and Pakistan, this resolution urged the two nations to resume dialogue on all outstanding issues, particularly those concerning peace and security. It encouraged both countries to find mutually acceptable solutions that addressed the root causes of tensions, including the Kashmir conflict.

UN Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) Resolutions (1948 & 1949)

The UNCIP resolutions of 1948 and 1949 further solidified the commitment of both India and Pakistan to resolve the J&K dispute in accordance with the will of the people. These resolutions required both governments to consult with the UNCIP to establish fair conditions for a plebiscite, ensuring that the future status of Jammu and Kashmir would be determined democratically.

These resolutions collectively underscore the international community's commitment to a peaceful and just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, with a strong emphasis on the principle of self-determination through a free and impartial plebiscite.

BURHAN WANI: TEN YEARS ON, THE VOICE THAT RECAST KASHMIR'S STRUGGLE

July 8, 2016 remains a date etched in memory. Burhan Muzaffar Wani, then just 21 years old, was martyred by Indian troops in Kokernag area of Islamabad district in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He was laid to rest in his hometown Tral, yet his presence did not fade. Ten years later, his name still stirs debate, emotion and reflection far beyond Kashmir.

Voices grew louder. For many, that moment deepened the meaning of the struggle. It was no longer framed only through politics. It became rooted in dignity, identity and the demand to be heard.

Even internationally, the ripple effects were visible. Kashmir, often sidelined in global discussions, began to reappear in political conversations. During

the 2016 United States presidential campaign, Donald Trump mentioned Kashmir in his remarks. Such references were rare in that arena. Yet the issue had found its way into global political language. This renewed visibility did not emerge in isolation. It was tied to the shift that Burhan Wani had set in motion.

His legacy also invites a legal reading. India describes such acts as terrorism. Another interpretation exists. That view places the struggle within the framework of self-determination, a principle grounded in international

law. The United Nations Security Council addressed Kashmir early on. Resolution 47 of 1948 called for a plebiscite so the people of Jammu and Kashmir could decide their future. Resolution 91 of 1951 and Resolution 122 of 1957 reaffirmed that position. These were not symbolic texts. They recognized a political dispute and linked its resolution to the will of the people.

Self-determination is not an abstract idea. It is embedded in the United Nations Charter. It appears again in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These instruments affirm that peoples have the right to determine their political status. Within this legal frame, the Kashmiri struggle is often read as a quest for a recognized right rather



Burhan Wani altered the grammar of resistance. He did not follow the old script. He chose visibility over obscurity. In an age shaped by screens and instant connection, he stepped forward and spoke directly to people. That choice changed everything. Kashmir was no longer a distant headline. It became immediate, human and impossible to ignore.

A generation saw itself in him. His words carried familiarity. His images traveled across borders. What once remained confined to local discourse entered global space. This was not a minor shift. It was a decisive turn. He recast the freedom struggle into a form the world could see and respond to.

Then came July 8. His death did not close a chapter. It opened one. Streets filled with grief and anger.

than a deviation from law.

Burhan Wani became a focal point for that debate. His life highlighted the gap between commitments made at the international level and realities experienced on the ground. He did not create the dispute. He forced it back into view. That is why his

once absent.

His influence also underscores the role of youth in shaping political discourse. At 21, he reached audiences that traditional channels often fail to engage. He spoke in a direct tone. He relied on tools that were accessible. That combination gave his



name continues to surface in discussions that extend far beyond Kashmir.

Ten years later, his imprint endures. Walk through occupied Kashmir and his memory remains active. It is carried in conversations, in quiet reflection and in public discourse. For many, he represents resolve. For others, he represents a moment of rupture. Yet no serious account can deny his impact. He changed how the struggle was perceived both inside and outside the region.

His resting place in Tral stands as more than a grave. It is a reminder of a life that redirected attention. Each anniversary renews that attention. It draws focus to unresolved questions. What does justice mean in this context? How can a political dispute persist despite decades of international acknowledgment? Why do voices from the ground struggle to find consistent global hearing?

These questions remain open. They demand engagement rather than dismissal. Burhan Wani's story compels that engagement. It resists silence. It pushes the conversation into spaces where it was

message reach and durability.

Ten years is a long span, yet his voice has not receded. It continues to travel across discussions on law, politics and human rights. That endurance explains his significance. He did not merely participate in a struggle. He altered its trajectory. He gave it a new international identity and placed it firmly within global awareness.

As this anniversary is marked, remembrance alone is insufficient. Reflection is essential. Reflection on law, on commitments and on the distance between principle and practice. His life and death did not resolve the Kashmir question. They ensured that it could not be set aside. That is why, ten years later, the voice of Burhan Wani still demands to be heard.

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