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Issue Brief

The Renewed Role of Azad Jammu & Kashmir in the Resolution of Kashmir Issue

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Situation of chaos and violence prevails in Kashmir after the death of Burhan Muzaffar Wani, a freedom fighter. The unrest is a major setback for peace efforts in the long troubled region. More than 60 days have passed since Kashmiri's have been under siege by the oppressing Indian military, with no access to basic utilities and communication with the outside world.

The young generation in Indian occupied Kashmir (IoK) is revolting and it is focused on achieving their objectives, especially their right of self-determination at any cost. In response, the government of IoK, at the request of the Government of the Indian Union has started another reign of terror against the poor Kashmiris, this time much more inhuman and brutal than before.

On the other side, Pakistan has responded to this crucial situation with moral, political and diplomatic vigor. Many leaders from different political parties, parliamentarians and the Pakistani Prime Minister himself have expressed deep concern at the outrages being perpetrated against the Kashmiris, and have also offered full support for the people of Kashmir for their struggle. The issue has also been highlighted in social media by the civil society in Pakistan.

Apart from all the reactions, now the question is: how can Pakistan take up this issue internationally in a manner that will generate moral and political pressure on India to address it immediately?

If Pakistan takes up this issue as a bilateral issue between Pakistan and India, it will not generate response because the international community will not want to be engaged in bilateral affairs. Another reason is that India has a stronger position in world affairs as compared to Pakistan.

After analyzing the current turmoil in IoK and resentment by Kashmiri people against the state of India for suppressing their rights, it is quite obvious that the issue of Jammu and Kashmir has never been a bilateral issue. It is in fact a trilateral issue, because the people of occupied Kashmir are also part of this issue. Pakistan has always supported the stance of the people of

Kashmir. Pakistan invited India to engage in dialogues in the recent past, but as always they were rejected by the Indian government. UN is also supporting the stance because according to the UN resolution, right of self-determination is the basic right of the people of Kashmir.

Now Pakistan has rightly decided to send a core group of parliamentarians to different capitals to highlight the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and the human rights violations by the occupying Indian security forces. This decision seems to be very good and timely. It will be a tremendous help in highlighting the issue.

While it is a priority of the government of Pakistan to highlight this issue internationally, but along with this, there are certain responsibilities of the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) as well. The recently elected government in AJK, and moreover, the elected President Sardar Masood Khan, would need to play a proactive role to highlight this issue. Sardar Masood Khan's long term tenure at the UN has given him an international standing and reputation, and nobody is better equipped to project the issue of Kashmir better than him. He is a new hope for the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

After taking charge as the president, he has taken some quick steps in this regard and put forward a six-point proposal to resolve the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the UN resolution.

Doors of international community must be knocked again and again for a viable solution of the issue of Jammu and Kashmir by both governments of AJK and Pakistan. At the United Nations (UN), there is need for appointing a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for Kashmir as other states like Iraq and Afghanistan had. Representative must be well-qualified and who can raise this issue in a manner that can generate response. Along with this, the UN should act as a neutral mediator.

United Nations Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) needs to be strengthened on both sides of the Line of Control (LOC). The weekly reports by the UN Peace Keeping Department to the Secretary General and Security Council by Assistant Secretary General should be stressed upon. India should be forced to reopen the UNMOGIP station in

Srinagar and Delhi. The opening of the Srinagar station will hopefully document, without discrimination, the human rights violations and the excessive use of force by Indian military forces. Intensive lobbying at UN forum is the need of the hour.

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) which has an observer status in the UN needs to be pushed for raising the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. It must be approached by the government to send its representative to IOK to analyze and determine the atrocities in IOK. Pakistan needs to ensure that this proposal is on the agenda of the upcoming meeting of the OIC on September 26, 2016.

Lastly, the role of the Pakistan 24-member Parliamentary Special Committee on Kashmir is questionable. The committee was established to project the Kashmir cause on the world stage. Despite having an annual budget of Rs. 66 million, it appears to be entirely dysfunctional. The Kashmir committee should be amended and made vibrant. It should include relevant entities, such as the intellectuals, Pakistani diasporas living in USA, EU and UK, and true stakeholders living in Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. It is very important that this committee is redesigned and re-strategized and takes appropriate measures to project the Kashmir issue through consistent rational global campaigns. The interest in the plight of the people of Kashmir must be reactivated at the social and humanitarian level across the world.

The Kashmir issue at this stage needs increased projection, and the immense humanitarian crisis needs to be highlighted. It is through these efforts that the focus of international conscience can be brought to bear on India that dialogue, and not military force, is the only viable option for peace and resolution of the issue of Kashmir.