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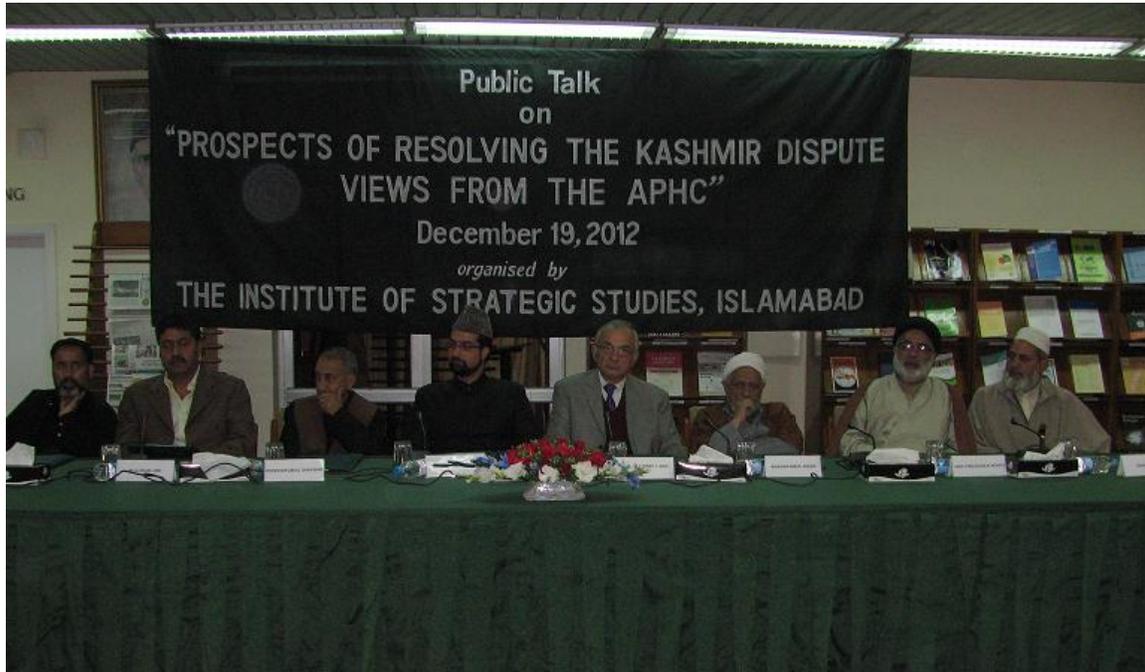
Prospects of Resolving the Kashmir Dispute: Views from the APHC

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**THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES,
ISLAMABAD**

Prospects of Resolving the Kashmir Dispute: Views from the APHC



Leading members of All Parties Hurriyat Conference visited Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) on December 19, 2012 to deliver a lecture on *“Prospects of Resolving the Kashmir Dispute: Views from the APHC”*. The Institute had organised the event under its distinguished Lecture series 2012. The delegation included Mir Waiz Umar Farooq, Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, Mr. Bilal Ghani Lone, Mr. Mukhtar Ahmad Waza, Molana Abbas Ansari, Agha Syed Hasan Al-Moosvi and Mr. Mussadiq Adil. Welcoming the guests from Indian occupied Kashmir, the Director General ISSI, Ambassador (Retd) Ashraf Jehangir Qazi said that it was an honour for the Institute to host a delegation of such eminent leaders. He said that Kashmir dispute is one of the oldest disputes at the UN agenda. Besides Indian refusal to make a meaningful effort to resolve this issue, Pakistan has also made number of mistakes. However, these mistakes cannot diminish the importance of the Kashmir issue. This issue is not about a piece of land but about basic right of millions of Kashmiris. Kashmiris have shown that despite the massive human rights abuses, their struggle would continue till the end. Being neighbours,

Pakistan is supposed to maintain good relations with India. However, these relations would never be at the cost of the freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people and Pakistan would continue its moral and diplomatic support for its Kashmiri brethren.

Speaking at the occasion, Mir Waiz Umar Farooq said that it is very important to determine the context of the issue - Is it a territorial dispute or a question of the rights of the Kashmiri people? He said that although the issue is bilateral in nature, but the aspirations of the Kashmiri people should also be taken into account. There can be no solution to this problem without taking the Kashmiri people on board. He expressed concern that the Government of India was successfully able to confuse grievances of the Kashmiri people with their aspirations. It has been projecting that resolving issues like health care and poor governance etc. would address the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. However, the people of Kashmir are looking towards Pakistan for support. He suggested that there should be a national consensus policy for the way forward so that it is not interrupted with the change of political government in the country. He said that there are only two ways to settle this issue i.e. through the UN Resolutions or a negotiated settlement between India and Pakistan. With regard to the second option, Pakistan acknowledges that Kashmiris have to be a part of negotiations but the important question arises here that which party would be allowed to come to the table? Would it be parties like PDP and National Congress which are backed by India or some other party supported by Pakistan? He stressed the need for developing a mechanism and a clear policy for the way forward. He welcomed the ongoing talks between India and Pakistan but also highlighted the fact that unless the core issue i.e. Kashmir is resolved, talks on other problems like Siachen and Sir Creek would not bear any fruit.

Mir Waiz regretted the fact that Pakistan did not take full advantage and did not support the indigenous mass movements that the Kashmiris have been waging for the past 2-3 years. The "Kashmir Intifada" was a bigger movement as compared to Arab Spring.

He said that APHC has been demanding the Indian government to revoke laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act and reduction of troops in the Valley. Pakistan should put its weight behind APHC. He also complained that the Indian government tries to keep the Hurriyat leadership out of contact with the people by putting them under house arrest and does not even allow them to offer Jummah prayers in the mosque. Towards the end of his lecture, Mir Waiz once again highlighted the importance of a mechanism for the way forward and expressed his resolve that Hurriyat would support any such mechanism.

Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat also spoke on the occasion. He said that a number of changes are taking place around the world which makes the prospects of the resolution of this dispute bright. Kashmiris want a permanent solution of this problem as it is linked to the peace and security of the entire South Asian region.

The views by the Kashmiri leaders were followed by a vibrant question and answer session. A guest from the audience said that Hurriyat is the most important political party in Kashmir. Since no mechanism has so far been evolved to include Kashmiris in the talks, what steps Hurriyat would suggest to address this issue. Mir Waiz Umar Farooq replied that it is absolutely imperative to make Kashmiris part of the negotiations. Unless Kashmiris are on board, no talks or negotiations would ever bear any fruit. Prof Bhat said that Kashmiris know it that they would never be able to score a victory against India militarily. But Kashmiris shall never accept defeat.

Another guest from the audience accepted that Pakistan did not support the 2008-2010 movements in Kashmir but that was because it was feared that Pakistan's involvement would harm its indigenous nature. He enquired the APHC leaders about what kind of support did they expect from Pakistan at that time? The guest also invited APHC leaders to express their ideas about which path Pakistan should follow i.e.

whether to settle the core dispute first or make progress on other issues to create a conducive environment before embarking on the road to settle the Kashmir dispute.

Another guest pointed out that the Kashmiri leadership has talked about de-militarisation in detail but did not touch upon militancy and Jihad.

Prof. Bhatt said that Kashmiris did not start their movement in 2008. A kind of situation arose where elections were approaching and an issue of transfer of land was turned into a communal issue by some political parties for their own advantage.

Mir Waiz said that the invitation to visit Pakistan was extended to many other leaders as well who decided not to come. This delegation was also visiting Pakistan after 4-5 years. This should have been a more continuous process. Before leaving Srinagar, consultative sessions were held with different segments of society. Kashmir is not a religious issue but within Jammu and Kashmir, opinions are divided along religious lines. Besides, Pakistan has also made Gilgit-Baltistan an independent province. He said that there was no pessimism in the Valley, but there was the lack of clarity.

On India-Pakistan relations, Mir Waiz said that war is no more an option. Negotiations are positive development but there should also be some relief for the people of Kashmir.

Concluding the talk, the Director General ISSI thanked the honourable guests for apprising the audience regarding their view point. He also thanked the audience for actively participating and making the event a success.

*Prepared by
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