



**INSTITUTE OF
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

web: www.issi.org.pk
phone: +92-920-4423, 24
fax: +92-920-4658

Issue Brief

Lobbying for Kashmir

Tooba Khurshid, Research Fellow, ISSI

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On August 16, 2016, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif appointed twenty two parliamentarians as 'emissaries' to lobby for the Kashmir cause globally and highlight the surge of atrocities in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). Since July 8, 2016 India has been engaged in horrendous human rights violations in IOK. United States, China, United Nations and the European Parliament have expressed deep concerns over the latest round of grave human rights violations in IOK, and have stressed on the need to allow access to humanitarian aid and observers in the conflict ridden region, where hundreds have been killed and thousands wounded due to inhumane use of force by Indian Occupational Forces (IOF).

The Indian genocide in IOK is designed to curb the pro-freedom voices and the right to self-determination enshrined in several United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) passed over IOK. Despite the brutal repression by the IOF, these voices remained unheard. United States' Vice President Hubert Humphrey on one occasion said that "The right to be heard does not automatically include the right to be taken seriously."

Today, the voice of the Kashmiris is challenging India and the world's conscience. And it is time to impress upon India to heed the path of justice, fair play, sanity and the legality of its occupation of Kashmir through effective lobbying.

Today, lobbying industries are well-established in liberal democracies, and which have become part and parcel of their policy making. Lobbying is an established, influential and legitimate way of influencing foreign policy.

This brief highlights how efficient lobbying can be done abroad by Pakistan that would help in launching successful lobbying campaigns for the cause and plight of Kashmiris living under Indian occupation.

Various lobbying groups across the world support the political systems of particular countries for their interest. For example, Jewish and Indian lobbying groups provide large contributions to the political parties of Australia and United States in their election campaigns. Supplying such contributions creates a bond where the providers become significant stakeholders. Lobbying

groups thus utilise their extensive resources to exert pressure and build strong networks within the political systems of target country to prevent the particular target country from implementing adverse policies that may be detrimental to the cause been lobbied.

The governments of Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) need to step up their efforts in arranging trips and programmes to educate the foreign delegates, human rights commissioners and foreign media groups about the Kashmiri perspective. This will also help to expose the Indian brutalities and garner support for the plight of Kashmiris globally.

Media is a significant target for any lobbying group, since it shapes the public discourse. Lobbying groups, through media networking, should position themselves with the mainstream media outlets. The group should remain in frequent touch with the media outlets to comment on the situation in IOK and clarify facts on various matters of the Kashmir dispute. The lobbying group should stress and promote open and free discussions of the situation in IOK in target media outlets. Strong ties with the mainstream media will enable the group to successfully lobby the media outlets, and that may help reduce the biased coverage of the Kashmir struggle and human rights violations in IOK.

There are now growing factions in all the states, including India, which support a balanced approach to the Kashmir dispute and recognise the Kashmiris right to self-determination. The lobbying group can use and persuade such factions to promote 'Human Rights for All' that will increase the legitimacy of the cause of Kashmiris. The lobbying group should also attempt to engage with favourable Indians with an emphasis on the Indian government's disregard for International Law, UNSCRs and human rights standards which will also be detrimental to India's interest in the long term.

Moreover, the United Nations (UN) and international human right bodies are engaged in the activities to protect, monitor and advance human rights across the world. As part of advocacy strategy, lobbying groups should continue to bring the matter of human rights violations and right of people to self-determination to the attention of all the international and regional human rights bodies. Human rights mechanism not only permits the advocators to present

information about the local human rights violations to the international community but also seeks to persuade states to adhere to certain human rights standards.

Following ways and means can be adopted to engage these organisation in a debate on human rights violations in IOK.

The governments of Pakistan and AJK, in consultation with civil society, should compile a national report and assess the progress and challenges to human rights in IOK. The report should be submitted to the human rights body for interactive dialogue between delegations and human rights member countries on regular basis.

Lobbying group may educate the representatives of countries on issues and concerns of human rights violations in IOK through the Diaspora community. Diaspora community that wants to lobby the countries should target its outreach to the organisations that may be receptive to the issues of human rights violations, and organise side events to publicise reports on 'human rights violations' and developments in IOK. Outreach may also target embassies, consulates and missions within and outside the country.

As expected, women issues in IOK remain understated and comprise only a small portion of lobbying communities. Recently, women have entered in lobbying profession in large number to highlight the issues women confront. Though there is some evidence that women behave differently than their male counter-parts, however, women rapidly assimilate into lobbying networks. Because of their different orientations and priorities, female lobbyists have had a substantial impact on both the style and substance of state politics. Consequently, today, female lobbyists are approached by public officials for advice more frequently than male lobbyists. Lobbying group can focus on hiring specialised women lobbyist to promote their agenda.

It is high time to challenge India using international human rights standards. Reporting and documentation of the Indian aggression and brutalities will facilitate this challenge. Effective lobbying therefore will be an additional tool to highlight the cause of Kashmir under Indian occupation.