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Issue Brief

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Martyrdom of Burhan Wani and Failings of the Indian Government

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The history of freedom struggles around the world has produced great characters and personalities like Nelson Mandela, Fidel Castro, William Wallace and Martin Luther King Jr. In recent age, Burhan Muzaffar Wani’s martyrdom in the Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) has once again revived and legitimised freedom struggle, where Kashmiris demand for fundamental rights and justice. The persona of Wani and his outreach on social media highlights shades of his courage, devotion and steadfastness to his cause and for the people of Kashmir, and his appeal to most importantly the youth oppressed around the world.

The 22 year old, Wani hailed from a well-educated and a well to do family. He took an open challenge to raise his voice for rights and justice for all against the oppressive Indian security apparatus in IOK. His story is a tale of naked Indian aggression on the innocent people of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), and how India itself is feeding public grievances that being one of the reasons behind the recent volcanic eruption of ‘new age intifada’ in IOK. Following the martyrdom of Wani, the entire IOK was embroiled in violence beginning July 8, 2016 to date. During the longest shutdown and curfew in the history of IOK to mourn the martyrdom of Wani, clashes erupted between the Indian forces and protesters in which hundreds of people were killed, 15,000 injured and hundreds were made blind by pellet guns.¹

In addition to this the recent revelation of mass graves in IOK was also hugely publicised in international media. The issue of human rights violation and the draconian Indian laws, the IOK demands an international probe, to which India shies away. Years of complacency and brushing under the carpet of Kashmiri injustices will take India nowhere, especially, when it desires to appeal to the world. Indian desires of a permanent seat at UN Security Council cannot be realised without the peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

The Indian government and security establishment’s strategy of conducting atrocities and human rights violations, try breaking the soul of freedom struggle is a blunder to which ruling Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) is fully responsible. The Indian forces have failed to rationalise this violent strategy. The use of pellet guns is justified by the Indian forces as “not the most lethal weapon” used to maintain maximum

¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1452963/burhan-wani-icon-kashmirs-freedom-fight/>

deterrence against people. This strategy has resulted in an outcry from the international community for causing human loss and lifetime injuries to innocent people.

Similarly, the recent episode of using Kashmiri people as a 'human shield' by the Indian forces in IOK was also shocking one. In such a disgrace to human life, the Indian forces sought reasons for their unjustified actions and the officer who adventured on such madness was rewarded. On the flipside, only to reveal their helplessness, the Indian government later suggested to pay compensation to the person who was used as an object and rejected such military tactics. Moreover, blaming external forces for causing unrest in IOK is also an indication of the Indian government's tendency of not reflecting inwards and being stringent. For instance, the same All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) to which India alleges to be a terrorist organisation and has forsaken Pakistan for engaging with them was being requested by the BJP government to intervene in bringing peace to IOK.² This duality of policy and character of BJP government is going to cause them their coalition government in J&K and will also bite them at multilateral forums.

The voice of dissent from the wider Indian society is very evident, just not to the Indian government, who seem to close their eyes and ears and wish to say not a word. Engagement with all stakeholders, as a policy should be pursued by the Indian state on an emergency basis, and that includes engaging the international community and Pakistan for the peaceful resolution of disputed territory of J&K, as per the wishes of the people of J&K (as highlighted in the UN Resolutions). Pakistan should make effective efforts for the case of Kashmiri people to the international community and provide moral support to them. For this purpose, Pakistan should demand afresh UN resolution recognising the indigenous nature of freedom struggle in IOK and the martyrdom of Burhan Wani.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7XALcc1jL0>