



**INSTITUTE OF
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

web: www.issi.org.pk
phone: +92-51-9204423, 24
fax: +92-51-9204658

Report – Seminar

“The Kashmir Dispute: An Unfulfilled Promise”

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Rapporteur: Shahroo Malik

Edited by: Najam Rafique

To mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit-Baltistan organized a Seminar titled, “*The Kashmir Dispute: An unfulfilled Promise*” on February 4, 2020 at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The President Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi was the Chief Guest at the occasion. Other speakers included: Syed Fakhar Imam, Chairman, Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir; Mr. Ali Amin Gandapur, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan; Syed Faiz Naqshbandi, Convener, All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC); and Mr. Altaf Hussain Wani, Chairman, Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR).

The Director General ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, in his welcoming remarks stated that the Kashmiris are struggling for freedom and for their right to determine their own destiny. The Kashmiris were given a solemn promise seventy years ago by the international community as stipulated in the UNSC resolutions. That promise, regrettably, remains unfulfilled. He stated that on August 5, 2019, the Modi administration unilaterally changed the status of occupied territory in violation of both the UNSC resolutions and Simla agreement, both of which prohibit any material change of status of the disputed territory. Along came a six months long siege of the Kashmiris, with every instrument of torture applied on them to break their will. The saddest part is that many nations claim to be the champions of human rights, but have turned a blind eye to the gross brutalities being inflicted on the Kashmiris by India. The Indian occupied Kashmir is bleeding. He informed the audience that report after report is emerging on the clampdown, the lockdown, the curfew imposed on the hapless Kashmiris.

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry stated that it is encouraging to see that the collective conscience of the international community is not yet dead. There are voices, some of them highly potent, which are being raised in favor of the Kashmiris. The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, under the leadership of a courageous Kashmiri woman, Parveena Ahanger, has documented the enforced disappearances since 1994, which constitute a crime against humanity and in fact a war crime as Kashmir is a conflict zone. Human Rights Watch reports have also recorded an increasing trend of rape in remote and poor villages in IoK at the hands of Indian security forces. He stated that since 1949, rape and forced prostitution are included in Geneva Convention as war crimes. While informing the audience about the international uproar on Kashmir since August 5, 2019, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry stated that Amnesty

International has spoken of detentions, the lack of press freedom, and attacks on religious freedom in India. Experts and scholars on Kashmir like Nitasha Kaul and Angana Chatterjee have spoken about the rise of Hindu majoritarianism and its relationship to Nazism. Eminent personalities like Bernie Sanders are calling for lifting the communications blockade and implementing UN-backed peaceful resolution that respects the wishes of the Kashmiri people. The Labor Party in the United Kingdom also passed an emergency motion on Kashmir in support of the right of Kashmiris to self-determination. UN Secretary General and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have both spoken on the issue several times.

He was of the opinion that the India's draconian laws are under constant criticism as these violate the basic norms of human behavior and violate international humanitarian law. As the Kashmiris brave these harsh times, the people of Pakistan stand with them. He stated that Pakistan's message of solidarity must be unambiguous and firm. He stressed that for centuries, the people of Kashmir and the people of Pakistan have interacted and these age old ties must be honored. He stated that the think tank community and academia need to play their part in this national and humanitarian cause. He affirmed that ISSI would continue to play its part in this regard.

While addressing the gathering, Syed Faiz Naqshbandi stated that the people of Kashmir demand that the international community should put pressure on India to implement the UNSC resolutions of carrying out a free and fair plebiscite and instantly stop the human rights violations that are being carried out in IoK. He said that the people of Kashmir pray for the peace and prosperity of Pakistan. He said with observance of Solidarity Day on February 5, Pakistan would give a clear and loud message to the world that the Kashmiris were not alone in their struggle for their right to self-determination. He informed the audience that on August 14 every year, the Kashmiris regularly hoisted Pakistan's national flag and observed August 15 as a black day, which was a referendum against the Indian occupation.

While addressing the gathering, Mr. Altaf Hussain Wani appreciated Pakistan's commitment to the cause of Kashmir. He said that since 1947, the struggle of Kashmiri people underwent various phases and the people of Indian occupied Kashmir were subjected to torture and oppression at the hands of the occupying forces. Despite all this, the people of IoK never lost

hope. He was hopeful that ultimately, the issue of Kashmir will be resolved through peaceful means according to the UNSC resolutions.

Mr. Ali Amin Gandapur in his remarks noted that India is carrying out genocide in Kashmir by exposing the 8 million Kashmiris to severe form of torture, rape and brutality. But all this has not weakened the determination of Indian occupied Kashmir (IoK) to gain freedom. He stated that the people of IoK are still waiting for the partition of 1947 to be completed. They are waiting for the implementation of UNSC resolutions to take place i.e. a free and fair plebiscite. He was of the view that the international community should do more against India and reminded the audience that Pakistan's support for the Kashmir cause will not waiver. Mr. Gandapur was of the opinion that the recent developments in India have shown that now India is only for Hindus and there is no place for minorities.

He stated that eight million Kashmiris have been put under lockdown by 900,000 Indian forces which is nothing less than a genocide. India has created a history of state-sponsored terrorism in IOJ&K, which has never been witnessed by the human race before. The minister said that in the last seven decades, the Kashmiris are being subjected to the worst kind of inhuman torture and aggression. The Indian forces are using pellet guns on the innocent Kashmiris which have injured more than 31,000 Kashmiris, while about 41,000 have been detained.

Mr. Gandapur pointed out that Pakistan's desire for peace should not be misperceived as Pakistan's weakness as the whole nation and its armed forces are ready to defend Pakistan against any aggression. The minister called upon the world to act and play its role as the situation in India could lead to a disaster affecting the whole region. While talking about the controversial Indian Citizenship Amendment Act, the minister said that the butcher of Gujarat is now turning into the butcher of all minorities. He appealed to the international community to express their solidarity with the Kashmiri people on humanitarian basis.

While addressing the gathering, Syed Fakhar Imam gave an historic overview of the Kashmir dispute and how it has evolved over the years leading to recent Indian actions of revoking the special constitutional status of IoK. He said that the Kashmir dispute was a colonial legacy. He stated that at the time of partition, rulers of princely states were given the choice of joining either India or Pakistan, according to wishes of their people. The ruler of Kashmir first wanted Kashmir

region to remain independent. Majority of people in Kashmir were Muslims, but its ruler Hari Singh was a Sikh. Majority of the people of Kashmir wanted to join Pakistan, and when ruler Hari Singh didn't take a decision, they took up arms. Facing defeat at the hand of the people, Hari Singh called for help from Indian government.

Syed Fakhar Imam was of the view that the recent Indian move in Kashmir is part of its larger domestic agenda of Hindu nationalism guided by *Hindutva*. He stated that the people of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir are living in a virtual Hell as the Indian forces have unleashed acts of barbarism to break their will for self-determination. He said that by revoking the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, India wanted to turn the Muslim majority into a minority. However, the Indian government was not expecting such uproar from the international community condemning its actions. The French parliament also discussed the issue for the first time, he added. Syed Fakhar Imam said now, whole of India is in turmoil and noted that Modi-led government posed a grave threat to Pakistan. He also warned that if India tried another "Balakot attack", there will be a much bigger answer from Pakistan in response.

Regarding the international community, he Imam said that UN and its Charter were there to side with the poor and helpless, but it has failed in its role. However, now there is a paradigm shift in the international opinion against India. He said the UN Security Council discussed the Kashmir issue after a lapse of about 50 years. This is the right time for the UN and the global community to immediately intervene and ensure the Kashmiris their right to self-determination as promised to them under the UNSC resolutions.

President Dr. Arif Alvi while addressing the gathering reaffirmed Pakistan's unflinching political, moral and diplomatic support to the people of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K) for their right to self-determination. He stressed upon the international community to realize the growing extremist *Hindutva* ideology and the persecution of Kashmiris in IOJ&K and the minorities elsewhere in India.

The President reiterated the demands that India should open Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir by lifting the lockdown, allow movement of people and restore internet and communication facilities, stop blaming Pakistan, and allow international media, news channels and delegations of parliamentarians from other countries to visit the occupied territory. He

further stated that the Indian government should allow the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) to report on what was happening there and take steps for immediate holding of a plebiscite under the UN Security Council resolutions.

Citing illegal and unilateral revoking of the special status of IOJ&K and the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, the President urged the world community to take cognizance of the dire implications of such oppressive and discriminatory designs against minorities in India, especially the Muslims.

He stressed that the whole Pakistani nation is standing with the Kashmiri people and would continue highlighting the issue. He said that Prime Minister Imran Khan has declared himself as an ambassador for the Kashmiris across the globe and has successfully drawn world community's attention on the issue. He pointed out that despite India's aggressive designs, Pakistan had always tried to resolve disputes through peaceful means. He assured that Pakistan is a responsible nuclear state which firmly believes in peace, while on the other hand, there is a belligerent and irresponsible neighbor. If anything goes wrong inside India, the blame is directed towards Pakistan. He was of the opinion that the extremist RSS and *Hindutva* ideology being pursued by the current BJP government will not only affect India internally, but will also affect Pakistan.

He stressed that today, international politics has very little to do with morality as trade now plays a bigger role than ethics. But as the battle of Kashmir is on moral grounds, Pakistan will continue to fight this moral battle and make the world aware of its moral responsibility towards the people of Kashmir. President Alvi assured that the people of Pakistan are standing with the Kashmiri people in their just struggle for self-determination.

The seminar was attended by ministers, advisors, special assistants to the Prime Minister, parliamentarians, foreign ambassadors based in Islamabad, Kashmiri leaders, academics, think tank community and members of the civil society.

PICTURES OF THE EVENT



