



SHAHEED SYED ALI SHAH GEELANI: AN OVATION

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



After relentlessly struggling and fighting against the Indian occupying forces for more than half a century, on the night of September 1, 2021, the veteran Kashmiri freedom movement leader and former chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Syed Ali Shah Geelani passed away at his home in Srinagar, Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). He was almost 92 years old.¹ As per his wishes, his body was wrapped in the Pakistan flag, which unnecessarily infuriated occupying Indian forces. His family was arrested, his body was snatched and desecrated by the Indian forces and buried without proper Muslim rituals. Soon after that, pre-empting the reaction of the people, the occupying forces locked down the entire IIOJK and especially mosques were targeted.² The people of IIOJK suffered and are still suffering the inhumane treatment by the occupying Indian forces, since its illegal and immoral occupation by the Republic of India in 1948. However, the Indian atrocities have accentuated such horrific acts under the premiership of right-wing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the mayhem has surpassed the brutal tactics of Nazi Germany. A few days after the recent episode

¹ "Syed Ali Shah Geelani: Kashmir Separatist Leader Dies at 92," *Al Jazeera*, September 2, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/1/syed-ali-shah-geelani-dies-after-prolonged-illness>.

² Aijaz Hussain, "India Locks down Kashmir after Top Separatist Leader's Death," *Associated Press News*, September 2, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/india-kashmir-de33936be7dcf5c210d975b638cf428f>; "India Locks Mosques, Ups Curbs to Scuttle March for Geelani," *The News*, September 11, 2021, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/890894-india-locks-mosques-ups-curbs-to-scuttle-march-for-geelani>.

of Indian viciousness, Pakistan requested the United Nations (UN) to conduct an impartial but immediate UN investigation into the custodial killing” of Shaheed Geelani.³ Previously, he was awarded *Nishan-e-Pakistan* by the Government of Pakistan for his unparalleled services for the people of IIOJK.

To make things worse, PM Modi revoked the special status of IIOJK and while abrogating the international law, it repealed the Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution on August 5, 2019.⁴ Since that time, Shaheed Geelani was under undeclared, yet strict house arrest and all kinds of medical and communication facilities were forbidden for such an old person. It is to be remembered here that on May 5, this year, Geelani’s closest confidant Mohammad Ashraf Sehrai, passed away due to COVID-19, in custody of the occupying Indian forces.⁵ It is beyond cruelty and cold-heartedness on the Indian conscience, that both Geelani and Sehrai were ageing political individuals and despite being gravely sick, were barred from any medical assistance.

A well-known author and historian Alastair Lamb lauded Syed Ali Shah Geelani’s righteousness in 1991 and mentioned that he did not take part in the 1983 State Elections “on the ground that to do so would be to endorse the State’s accession to India.”⁶ Later, Geelani and his compatriots were arrested in March 1985 and suffered torture of the worst kind.

Pakistan pays Tribute to Shaheed Geelani

The President of Pakistan Dr. Arif-ur-Rehman Alvi paid homage to Shaheed Geelani for his lifelong struggle against the Indian illegal occupation and condemned the cold-blooded behaviour of Indian armed forces.⁷ The Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan also extended his condolences to the grieved family and prayed for the departed soul. PM Khan also took the Indian illegal authorities in a heavy-handed manner for snatching the body of Ali Geelani and burying it in the darkness of night, while denying the family of religious rites and rituals.⁸ The National Security Adviser of Pakistan Dr. Moeed W. Yusuf also expressed his heartfelt comments for Syed Ali Geelani and argued that “He

³ Iftikhar A. Khan, “UN Inquiry Sought into Kashmiri Leader Geelani’s Death,” *Dawn*, September 11, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1645638>.

⁴ “Will Restore Article 370 In Jammu And Kashmir, Says Mehbooba Mufti After PM Meet,” *NDTV*, June 24, 2021, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/told-pm-that-j-k-people-dont-accept-illegal-abrogation-of-article-370-mehbooba-mufti-2471758>.

⁵ Rifat Fareed, “Ashraf Sehrai: Pro-Freedom Kashmir Leader Dies in Detention,” *Al Jazeera*, May 5, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/5/kashmir-incarcerated-separatist-leaders-dies>.

⁶ Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy 1846-1990* (Hertfordshire, UK: Roxford Books, 1991), 341.

⁷ “The President of Pakistan,” *Twitter*, September 2, 2021, <https://twitter.com/PresOfPakistan/status/1433160190631849994>.

⁸ “Imran Khan,” *Twitter*, September 5, 2021, <https://twitter.com/ImranKhanPTI/status/1434386650679812101>.

lived his life for the people of Kashmir and for their freedom from India's illegal and oppressive occupation.”⁹ While addressing the “6th Think Tank Forum” hosted by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) on September 2, 2021, the Honourable Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, expressed his grief and sorrow over the sad demise of Geelani. FM Qureshi presented glowing remarks for the long and steadfast struggle of the Kashmiri freedom leader. He argued that he was completely shocked over the treatment of Indian occupying forces which they rendered to the survivors of Geelani.¹⁰ Also, Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Indian High Commissioner at Islamabad and strongly protested the snatching of Geelani’s body and burial against the wishes of his family.¹¹

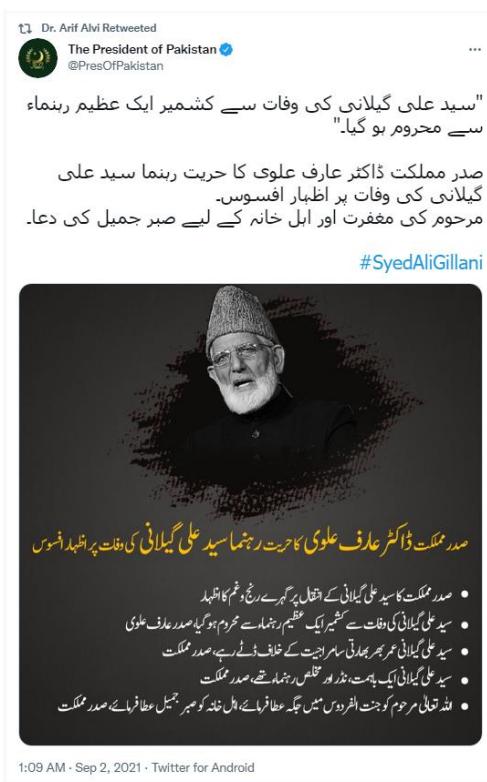


Figure 1: The President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi paid homage to Shaheed Geelani and tweeted his sincerest condolences.¹²

⁹ “Moeed W. Yusuf,” *Twitter*, September 2, 2021, <https://twitter.com/YusufMoeed/status/1433145210335281159>.

¹⁰ “Shah Mahmood Qureshi Complete Speech at 6th Think Tank Forum via Video Link in Islamabad (02.09.21),” *YouTube*, September 4, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU2OeJ-UunA>.

¹¹ “Indian Charge d’ Affaires (Cd’A) Summoned to the Foreign Office for a Demarche over Indian Occupation Forces’ Reprehensible Conduct in the Aftermath of Syed Ali Shah Geelani’s Passing Away,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, September 3, 2021, <https://mofa.gov.pk/indian-charge-d-affaires-cda-summoned-to-the-foreign-office-for-a-demarche-over-indian-occupation-forces-reprehensible-conduct-in-the-aftermath-of-syed-ali-shah-geelani/>.

¹² “The President of Pakistan.”



Figure 2: Prime Minister Imran Khan condemned the snatching of Shaheed Geelani's body.¹³

Shaheed Geelani: Reaction from within the IIOJK

Mehbooba Mufti, Chairperson of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) condemned the snatching of Geelani's body from its family and argued that "One can fight the person while he is living but the dead body should get respect. Geelani's last rites should have been allowed as per his wishes." She said that "I also had differences with Geelani but the dead body should not be treated badly. What we saw was against humanity. Everyone's last wish should be respected. The incident witnessed was against the cultural identity of India."¹⁴

Also, National Conference President and Member of Parliament Farooq Abdullah extended his condolences by arguing "May Almighty Allah grant peace to the deceased and forbearance to the grief-stricken to bear the irreparable loss." His son Omar Abdullah said that "I pray to Almighty to bestow peace to the departed soul in Janat and give courage to the bereaved family members to bear the loss."¹⁵

¹³ "Imran Khan."

¹⁴ Syed Khalid Hussain Hussain, "Syed Ali Shah Geelani's Last Rites Should Have Been Allowed as per His Wishes: Mehbooba Mufti," Zee News, September 6, 2021, <https://zeenews.india.com/india/syed-ali-shah-geelani-s-last-rites-should-have-been-allowed-as-per-his-wishes-mehbooba-mufti-2391772.html>.

¹⁵ "Abdullahs Condole Demise of Geelani," *Kashmir Reader*, September 5, 2021, <https://kashmirreader.com/2021/09/05/abdullahs-condole-demise-of-geelani/>.

Moreover, the Indian authorities in IIOJK imposed lockdown to escape public humiliation and the people's support for Pakistan.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, India under PM Modi presents the modern-day picture of Nazi Germany under Hitler. The aged Shaheed Geelani was elected several times and represented the people of IIOJK and being a former representative, he deserved medical facilities of all sorts. Nonetheless, he was denied access to such facilities even on humanitarian grounds. However, contrary to the much-needed medical treatment amid ailing health, it is worth noting that Shaheed Geelani did not yield to Indian atrocities and inhumane behaviour – above all, he did not beg for such rightful basic human rights. Instead, till his last breath, he was steadfast and like the Sons of Liberty (American revolutionaries), Geelani's heart and soul awaited nothing, but freedom and liberty. It is quite deplorable that the Modi government with its sham democracy and flawed pluralistic propaganda, intends to prosecute Geelani's legacy and its family under the Draconian laws. If Shaheed Geelani was guilty of anything, he was guilty of demanding the inalienable rights of freedom and liberty for the besieged people of IIOJK.