

Report – Seminar

“Commemorating the Black Day: India’s Plunder of Jammu and Kashmir”

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PICTURES OF THE EVENT





The India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad organized the Seminar on Commemorating the Black Day: India's Plunder of Jammu and Kashmir on October 27, 2021, at ISSI. The Chief Guest of the event was General Ehsan Ul Haq, NI (M), (Retd), former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. The speakers' panel included Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI, Dr. Saif Malik, Director ISC, Mr. Ahmad Quraishi, Executive Director YFK-International Kashmir Lobby Group (Kashmir Dispute and the Role of International Community and Media), Dr. Asma Shakir Khawaja, HOD Department of Strategic Studies, National Defence University (NDU) and Maj. Gen. Dr. Raza Muhammad, HI (M), (Retd), Advisor to the President NDU.

Dr. Saif Ur Rehman Malik, Director ISC set the tone with his introductory remarks. Dr. Saif said that today we have gathered to Commemorate Black Day in the bleeding history of Kashmir. Though every day in Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), bring miseries in the lives of innocent Kashmiris but 27th October is observed and remembered when India on the same day in 1947, contrary to the aspirations of Kashmiris and against the international norms, landed its troops in Srinagar. Since that day onwards, the perpetual moves of ethnic cleansing, through brutal tactics, yet unending were raging on. Being the "oldest and unresolved international conflict," the Kashmir dispute presents a formidable challenge to regional as well as global peace and security, in addition to being a huge question mark viz-à-viz the effectiveness, sincerity, and efficacy of the United Nations.

Dr. Saif highlighted that Kashmir is a source of continued tension between the two nuclear equipped South Asian neighbours, the dispute culminated into three wars and serious conflicts between Pakistan and India since 1947. Presently, every Kashmiri, particularly the youth, is determined for their Motherland to be part of Pakistan despite huge losses. Pakistan has always and will continue its moral support for the Kashmir freedom movement and every year October 27 is marked as Black Day to give the world a loud and clear message that Kashmiris will never surrender and continue to struggle for their right of self-determination despite Indian draconian laws and ruthlessness.

Dr. Saif argued that with this backdrop, the ISC at ISSI in collaboration with National Defence University, has organized today's seminar to contemplate on the prevailing situation in the IIOJK and raise more awareness regarding India's sinister designs both internally and at the global level. "We stand together as a nation today and cannot see our heaven further bleed; Kashmir belongs to Pakistan and Pakistan belongs to Kashmir," he added.

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI expressed that Pakistan commemorates the day that has brought a great deal of misery not just to the innocent people of Kashmir but the entire region. He said that it has become a ritual now to reiterate our solidarity with Kashmiri brethren every year. He exclaimed on how three generations of Kashmiris have suffered so badly, and their voices have remained largely unheard as yet. And these illegalities have been reinforced when on August 5, 2019, India revoked Kashmir's special status. Amb. Chaudhry called the last step as re-colonization. He emphasized on how Pakistan has stood by the people of Kashmir throughout these years and called out India at every international forum. Perhaps owing to the pragmatism, commerce and trade of the world with India, the Kashmiri voices have not been heard as effectively. There have been a few concerns raised on the human rights violation in the region but the major violation that occurred 74 years back has not been questioned appropriately. Moreover, not enough pressure has been exerted on India at the international level.

Last but not the least, he expressed that he was honoured to have such illustrious people and thanked specifically Chairman Board of Governors, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood for gracing the event.

Mr. Ahmad Quraishi, Executive Director YFK-International Kashmir Lobby Group began his speech by thanking the ISC and NDU for putting together the whole event. He said that there has been a major shift in the past five years in the language of the international community on the Kashmir issue and the state of India. He was of the view that one way or the other, the Kashmir issue is moving towards an eventual resolution, and we can only wait to see how it would look like. He recalled how difficult it was for him six years ago to find critical news and articles on the Kashmir issue for research. But he was optimistic that things have changed a great deal since

the start of 2016. The United Nations (UN) has finally broken up its semi-silence that it maintained for almost half a century.

Mr. Quraishi said that since 1970-71 the UN did not speak up on the matter the way it started immediately by the end of 2016 after the extrajudicial execution of Burhan Wani. In the fall of the same year at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the first time Kashmir became a part of the opening statement of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Kashmir issue was raised among other conflicts like those of Yemen and Iraq. He mentioned that there are various archives on Human Rights Violations in Kashmir that could easily be found online. He felt ashamed that not much has been contributed in this respect from the Pakistani journalists.

Mr. Quraishi gave due credit to the international news channels for their contribution. He talked about how the local Kashmiri journalists who have been facing several restrictions in Kashmir for past few decades got their sponsors from outside. He paid a tribute specifically to three international news producers in this regard, TRT, Al-Jazeera, and New York Times. Further elaborating, he said that this is the glass half full, the international language on the issue and on the Indian treatment in the region has eventually changed. He credited Pakistan with fulfilling this mission as it has been striving to get the world's attention to the issue. Pakistan has been successful in not just pulling the world's attention toward human rights violations in Kashmir but inside India too. Mr. Quraishi explained that half the job is done, and half is to be completed. The empty part of the glass symbolizes the translation of the newfound change at the international level to the ultimate conflict resolution. He concluded his speech by putting a few suggestions. He was of the view that there needs to be a diplomatic innovation to convert the progress that has been made to the final conflict resolution. Moreover, there needs to be a change in the mindset too, of the Pakistani state and the people to fill the empty part of the glass.

Dr. Asma Shakir Khawaja, HOD Department of Strategic Studies, NDU, started off with the Modi's Kashmir policy, and its 4 main highlights:

- Indian Colonialism
- Ideology, Capital Politics, Real Politics, and Geopolitics
- Manipulative Purposes

- Modi 2.0

She proceeded with informing the audience about the Article 370 (which was negotiated in 1949), the effects of its revocation, Pakistan never accepting it, and how the breach of Article 370 was also a breach to the Simla Agreement, and a blatant attack on Kashmir's demography. She went on to talk about how the revocation of Article 370 led to the occupation of Kashmir with unlawful annexation, and how India was an occupying force in Kashmir, and how Modi falsely claimed to achieve certain objectives. Later, she explained how the Modi government is harming human rights, and how Kashmiris were said to be traitors (assuming they support Pakistan by heart), and the different forms of violence that Kashmiris had to endure by the hands of Indian forces.

Dr. Asma argued on the point that Kashmiris' struggle was justified by the 4th Geneva Convention and the legality and morality of such a struggle. She concluded her arguments in the light of international law and the norms pertaining to the Kashmir issue.

Maj Gen (Retd). Dr. Raza Muhammad was staunchly of the view that Kashmir runs in his blood. He is the most aggrieved when blood spills in Kashmir. He deplored Kashmir; the remarkable heaven had been turned into such a mess. It is the pellets that rain in Kashmir. He saluted the local Kashmiris who with bare-hands and without much resource, stand eyeball to eyeball against an army of 9 lac personnel. He explained that a lot had changed since 5th of August and Indian purely military strategy to suppress the Kashmiri voices has not been able to pacify the Kashmiri insurgents. He believed that Pakistan is their hope and Pakistan must stand with them in support. He called the Himalayan Insurgency as one major success in 100 years as far as the freedom struggles are concerned.

Maj. Gen. Dr. Raza was confident that Kashmiris are going to resist until they get their due rights, and it does not matter to them whether they have the international support or not. He was of the view that Pakistan has been able to quell terrorism and extremism successfully. But he also believed that Pakistan at the moment finds itself in a tricky situation. Pakistan is sandwiched between the superpower rivalry of US and China. He claimed that Pakistan has by default become a Chinese ally and China is in pursuit of world hegemony although it is not their national stance. He recalled that when after 9/11, the US had been investing heavily in the War on Terror

in different parts of the world, China was expanding its influence through trade. There are 100 states now part of the Belt and Road Initiative. He questioned whether the states that are partners in trade, stand against each other? He then moved on to the US countermeasures in the Indo-Pacific to resist the expanding Chinese sphere of influence. He said that India is now an official strategic partner of the US in the form of the QUAD alliance. He briefly touched upon the 50 billion dollars arms sales deals that India has conducted in the last 15 years with Israel, Russia, US, UK, France etc. He said that the Indian western diaspora plays a great role in building up the stature of India.

Maj. Gen. Dr. then contemplated where Pakistan stands in all of this. To start with, he believed there needs to be a discourse on how Pakistan stands with Kashmir and what were the options. He talked about the importance of non-kinetic options like diplomacy. Elaborating on the non-kinetic options, he recalled the confidence building first steps that had been taken in the time of Musharraf and with Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh on the Indian side. He discussed the 4-point formula that had been suggested in the Musharraf era and how both sides almost came to the terms.

Maj. Gen. Dr. Raza then talked about the seven reasons formula proposed by Gen. Musharraf, then there was the Old Dickson formula very close to the solution accepted partially by both sides. Today, Modi talks about surgical strikes and over-powering Pakistan in ten days. He said that there we need to fill that void now and how we can do that is through economic leverage to get things started. He maintained that there are ample ways we can do it but the end should always be Kashmir. He said it with pride that we are not a small country; we are a nuclear power with 162 million of youth forming our population. He finished his speech with a poetic verse; *“sar salaamat ho to deewar bhi hai darwaza.”*

Chief Guest General Ehsan Ul Haq, NI (M), (Retd) began by formally greeting everyone. He congratulated ISSI for organizing the event and acknowledging Kashmir's struggle for *azaadi*. He then began saying how he's been on the number of Track 2.0 with several Indian intelligence chiefs. He went on that once he was having a chat with a retired Indian officer of the Air Force, a Canberra bomber. They talked about the definition of *azaadi* and that the Indian officer was of the view that *azaadi* does not mean freedom. The point being that he maintained this because he

was so blinded in denial of reality. He said that Kashmir's struggle for identity goes back hundreds years ago and that this could be confirmed with someone of Kashmir origin. He called 27th October as the darkest day of Kashmir's history.

Gen. Ehsan explained how Jammu and Kashmir was illegally annexed by India and how an instrument of accession was faked by Maharaja Hari Singh. He went ahead without going into the basic details of it. He claimed that at the very core Kashmir was about the right to self-determination. He put his frustration into words by saying how a simple issue has been transformed into a complex one. Nuclearization of South Asia and the growing Indo-China confrontations have further added fuel to the fire. General Ehsan shed light on how alienated Kashmiris are in Indian state of affairs. He referred to the example provided by Dr. Asma on the recent response in the Indian state after a cricket match and how anyone who celebrated Pakistan's victory had been in trouble. He mentioned how the most alienated youth in Kashmir was provided with Indian national scholarships especially after 2016. It was done either to bring a demographic change in the region or normalizing the situation. He talked about how since the Pulwama incident, they have started to target even more Kashmiri youth, who stayed in the hostels and different locations in India. Gen. Ehsan then explained how the move eventually backfired when the ones who came on the national scholarships got to know first-hand the degree of alienation that they face by the Indian state. They went back to their homeland and joined the lines of forces against the Indian state. He then concluded a few points, first being that the Kashmir issue cannot be wished away.

He argued that after August 5, 2019, he met a diplomat who asked him that if you do not consider the kinetic option for Kashmir, what your options will be eventually? Gen Ehsan recalled himself replying that the Kashmiris themselves are the option. He said that the Kashmir struggle has continued for four generations now and it is to be noticed that the current generation is smarter than the previous ones. He put his point and rather a critique on how Kashmiris have now been forced to desperation by us. He believed that by maintaining the status quo and staying on the backburner, we have forced Kashmiris to pick up arms. He also raised a critical point that political legitimacy and the option of talks has been discredited in Kashmir. He further stated that those Indian claims of mainstreaming Kashmir for pacifying the region are exposed. He suggested a shift from political security problem to humanitarian catastrophic problem. The

Indians believe that after running out of security options and bureaucratic options, their fascist ideology might be able to break the Kashmiris resistance. This is their only hope, Gen Ehsan continued. He explained in a sarcastic manner that the militarization of the Kashmir region and the overwhelming oppression after 2016 by the Indian state has resulted in the “internationalization” of the issue. Something that we have failed to do for long, he concluded.

He came towards the end of his speech by asking a few questions;

Are we doing enough? Have Kashmiri *shahadats* of 400,000 done enough? Do we have the right approach and finally what is that we need to do?

He spoke very passionately on the scope of media in determining the future of Kashmir. He reiterated that the current generation of Kashmir is smarter and is technology-savvy. He used precisely the word of equalizer for social media and media in general. He believed that the platform of social media would act as an equalizer for both Pakistan and Kashmir. He was optimistic in anticipating that in the future the Kashmiri voices will be heard more effectively. He then pondered upon the Indian policy of negating any third-party mediation on the issue. He stated that in future India would wish to have third party mediation. The never-ending Kashmir struggle is clearly reflected in the growing intolerance in the region. Gen. Ehsan explained that the Indian state is now short of options, and he pointed at the recent visit of Amit Shah to Kashmir. He talked about how Shah has failed in bringing demographic changes in the region. He answered his own question of “are we doing enough?” in the later part of the speech. He nodded in approval that “yes we are doing enough.”

Gen. Ehsan then ended his speech by giving some great suggestions. He suggested that before helping Kashmir in getting their freedom, it is pertinent that we have our house in order. He emphasized that it is important for us to behave like a developed and responsible nuclear power. Only then we can help the people of Kashmir in the truest sense.