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Report – Webinar

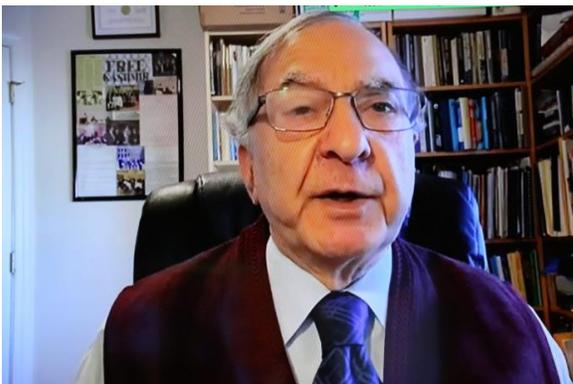
“Commemorating Solidarity with Kashmiris”

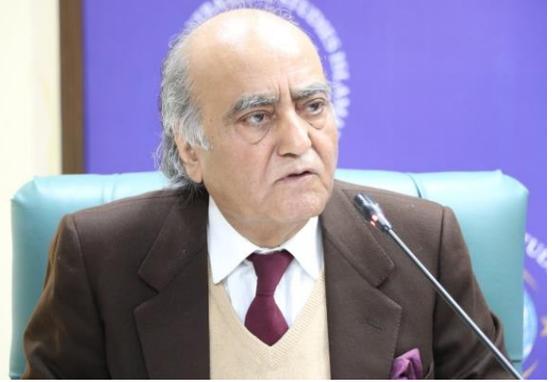
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PICTURES OF THE EVENT





India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a Webinar on “**Commemorating Solidarity with Kashmiris**” on February 4, 2022.

In his introductory remarks, **Dr. Saif ur Rehman Malik**, Director ISC welcomed the participants and began by stating that the observance of Kashmir Solidarity Day by Pakistan on the 5th of February illustrates Pakistan’s undaunted resolve regarding the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. He added that undoubtedly, Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan and the geographical pivot of history. Dr. Malik paid tribute to the heroism and dedication of the Kashmiri people whose third generation is keeping the resistance alive.

In his welcome remarks, **Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhary, Director General, ISSI** said that Pakistan has been observing Kashmir Solidarity Day since 1990 when Kashmiris rose against the illegal occupation of their land by India. Pakistan is linked to Jammu and Kashmir geographically, ethnically, and religiously. He said that India is looking for a military solution to the issue of Kashmir as it has not learned a lesson from the US experience in Afghanistan. He further articulated that Pakistan has been observing the Kashmir Solidarity Day for the last 37 years and it has been consistently sending a message to the Indian leaders that Pakistan will continue to stand with its Kashmiri brothers and will always oppose the rule of oppression by India.

In a video message, **Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, President Azad Jammu, and Kashmir** expressed that the significance of observing Kashmir Solidarity Day has increased manifold since August 5, 2019, when India revoked Article 370 and illegally re-annexed Kashmir. He highlighted the Indian designs of bringing about a demographic change in IIOJK to turn the Muslim majority into a minority. He also spoke about Indian plans to impose a Hindu Chief Minister once the delimitation process is completed. The fact is that the Indian Armed Forces are carrying out the massacre of the innocent Kashmiri youth daily basis. Sinister plans of India to bring about a disproportion of finance and population are evident from its attempts to bring foreign investment and investments from other parts of India into Kashmir are mainly steered by Hindus. He urged the Kashmiris across the world to come forward and actively participate in organized events to mark this very important day to convey a strong message to the world community.

Justice Ali Nawaz Chowhan, former Chief Justice of the Gambia and elected International Judge of the United Nations shared his views on “understanding Kashmir conflict from the prism of international law”. He first briefly shared the reports released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in which he pointed out the Indian atrocities in Jammu and Kashmir and mentioned the general loss of men and material in the Indian occupied Kashmir. While dismissing the option of war, Justice Chowhan suggested the use of the principle of Universal Jurisdiction in taking the issue to International Court where universal jurisdiction is accepted. He quoted that Universal Declaration can be instrumental if the breach of fourth Geneva convention is reported that involves killings, tortures, inhumane treatment, wilfully causing suffering, unlawful deportation, compelling the protected person to serve in the forces, depriving a protected person of the right of a fair trial, taking of hostages and deliberate attempts of demographic changes. He stated that we have clear evidence of India having been perpetrating all these violations. Pakistan, thus, is in the position to utilize this option against India since we stayed away from taking the matter to the International Court of Justice in the past. He also suggested invoking the United Nations principle of responsibility to protect that was adopted in the World Summit of 2005, Pakistan can use the dossier which it provided and all the previously mentioned reports so that Pakistan may take up the matter for the adjudatory purpose to the court or we may invoke section 99 of the United Nations charter and submit a complaint to the Secretary-General so that it may put it before the General Assembly to take due action.

Mr. Munir Akram, Pakistan’s Permanent Representative to the UN in a video message stated that the issue of Kashmir is an unfinished agenda which is among the oldest and earliest issues recorded in the United Nations body and is persisting in the South Asian region for the last 74 years. He provided a historical overview of Kashmir and said that how after the abrogation of article 370 of the Indian constitution, India has been forcefully and illegally keeping the people of occupied Kashmir under a permanent state of curfew, imposing collective punishments by targeting entire villages, using rape as a weapon of war, having illegally detained more than 13000 Kashmiri youth and curtailing the freedom of expression and religion. He said that “K” in “Pakistan” stands for Kashmir and it is an inalienable part of the body and soul of Pakistan. The very idea of Pakistan is incomplete without Kashmir. Because of the strong diplomacy of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the issue of Kashmir has been at the centre stage.

He further articulated that due to the strong advocacy of the Kashmir issue by PM Imran Khan, the Indian atrocities and grave human rights violations in Kashmir has been exposed to the world and it has revived the global recognition of the Kashmir issue and reinvigorated the urgency for the solution of Kashmir issue through United Nations resolutions for sustainable and durable peace in South Asia.

He quoted that the UN Secretary-General has reaffirmed that the UN's position on the Kashmir issue is based on the UN charter and during the last two years, the Security Council has met three times to discuss the situation in the Indian occupied Kashmir and at numerous occasions, the United Nations authorities expressed concern over the gravity of the situation in Kashmir. The permanent mission of Pakistan at the United Nations will continue to promote Kashmir's cause. BJP RSS cohort is bound to fail in its attempts to crush the legitimate demands of the Kashmiri people physically, politically and psychologically, he concluded.

Ambassador Aziz Ahmad Khan Former High Commissioner of Pakistan to New Delhi spoke on "Role of international organizations in resolving the Kashmir issue". He stated that the ultimate responsibility of finding a solution to problems like that of Kashmir's falls on the shoulders of international organizations like the UN but unfortunately, no concrete action on Kashmir has been taken by the international community or organizations. He expressed that India itself took the matter to the United Nations but once the resolution of holding a plebiscite was passed, India came up with one or the other excuse to evade the promises it made to the international community and later declared Kashmir as its integral part. Today, with 900,000 Indian troops stationed, Kashmir has become the most militarized part of the world. The United Nations Security Council passed several resolutions on Kashmir but none of them was put into consideration by India despite the presence of the Kashmir issue as an unfinished agenda in the United Nations Security Council. Kashmir issue being a matter concerning two parties, India manifested the audacity to declare it as its integral part.

Ambassador Khan reiterated that the Indian audacity was a result of the failure of the United Nations to effectively address the matter. After the abrogation of the special status of Kashmir, India committed unbelievably gruesome atrocities in Kashmir and no concrete effort has been made by the United Nations to stop India from its high headedness. Although on numerous

occasions, the Security Council carried out discussions about Kashmir, these were closed-door talks produced no results whatsoever. The OIC and the international human rights commission did nothing except to pay lip service to Kashmir which is quite unfortunate as Indian Armed Forces are committing atrocities in Kashmir with impunity, he concluded.

Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Secretary-General, World Kashmir Awareness Forum, Washington DC in his video message highlighted the importance of the event and said that such event gives a very clear message to India that the Kashmir issue is still alive. He stated that the New York Times edition of August 10, 2019, states that “Kashmir had become a living hell for the Kashmiris”. He also quoted from the Washington Post edition of August 5, 2019, stating that “Indian democracy was dying in silence in Kashmir”. He also quoted Harinder Bawa, an Indian journalist who wrote “Everywhere, there is a pain in Kashmir. There is darkness everywhere; the valley has lost its magic and its mystique” while also stating Justice Bahauddin Farooqui who wrote, “There is only one thing in Kashmir; suffering, suffering nothing else but the suffering of the people of Kashmir”. Friends of Kashmir must become the voice of Kashmiris, Fai added.

He stressed that the Kashmiri diaspora, people of Pakistan and supporters of Kashmir cause all around the world to take to the streets and enlighten the world about the demands of the Kashmiri people. At last, he said that Kashmiris have the right to determine their future.

Mr. Ershad Mahmud, Director General Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell, Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir shared his views on ‘ Impact of rising Hindutva on Kashmir Conflict’. The ruling BJP government in India uses Kashmir to achieve its ideological and political objectives. Through carrying out atrocities in Kashmir and committing violence on the Muslim population of Kashmir, BJP seeks to appease extremist forces of India that pedal on the ideology of Hindutva. He quoted the statement of the Washington Post which stated “Kashmir crisis is not about territory rather it is about a Hindu victory over Islam. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi used a Muslim majority state as a demonstration of Hindu power”. He stated that the radical Hindu government of India was attempting to change the entire demography of Kashmir by inviting Hindu settlers from other parts of India to come and settle in Kashmir as well as bringing the investment of Hindu owners to buy lands in Kashmir to create an artificial disproportion of wealth in Kashmir.

He reiterated that since BJP took control of India, public lynching and open persecution of other religious minorities had become a routine and it was not wrong to assume altogether that India has shifted hugely from a secular state to a Hindu Rashtriya today. Not only religious persecution but political dissent is also not allowed and forcefully suppressed in India as evident from forceful jailing of opposition leaders and persecution of human rights activists. BJP's Kashmir policy has no component of political engagement with Kashmiri leadership. It only seeks a military solution through repression. BJP considers the revocation of Article 370 as its ideological victory.

He said that the world too is increasingly realizing the fact that India is sliding towards becoming a fascist state. The component of policy dialogue is now inherently missing from Indian politics as populist leadership is running India in a completely authoritarian fashion. There is a need to tell the world community that the issue of Kashmir will not settle in the way India is trying to settle and if it remains unsettled, it may open new disputes, he concluded.

Ms. Urooj Raza Sayyami, electronic and print media journalist and analyst to BBC focused on "Role of media in promoting Kashmir cause". She said that every disaster, war and tragedy bring opportunity. Following 2019, there are a lot of opportunities to highlight the issue of Kashmir across the globe. She highlighted the difficult conditions in which Kashmiri journalists and media houses have been working in IIOJK. Pakistani journalists can play their part in highlighting the issue of Kashmir independently.

She lamented the fact that Pakistani media does not give the issue of Kashmir its due coverage. In this regard, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority PEMRA is the most important component in propagating the stories of Kashmir in Pakistan and to the international community. PEMRA should consider issuing new licenses to new media houses and make the existing media houses bound to telecast the stories of Kashmiri people and spread them across the world. Pakistani journalists should assume this duty of the Kashmiri journalists who are not able to perform their duties since the Kashmir issue is not only about the armed atrocities, but it also incorporates issues like education, health, and freedom of movement.

She pressed on the efficacy and capability of social media in highlighting the issues like that of Kashmir and stated that social media has gradually replaced conventional print and electronic

media. Pakistani journalists should consider using social media platforms to spread the cause of Kashmiri people as due to the unavailability of the internet and Wifi, the people of Kashmir are unable to express their conditions. Media can play a pivotal role in promoting the Kashmir cause, thus media in Pakistan need to focus more on the ongoing human rights violations in IIOJK and the role of media is equally important to project the Kashmir issue to foreign and diplomatic channels.

Chairman BoG, ISSI Ambassador Khalid Mahmood in his concluding remarks said that issue of Kashmir is still alive because the case of Kashmir is based on solid legal and moral grounds. He mentioned the historical perspective of the Kashmir issue alongside the issues like that of Hyderabad and Junagadh, and expressed that while other underlying issues may have been subsided for the time being, the Kashmir issue remained a burning crisis which still is looking for a solution after more than 70 years of partition of the Sub-continent. He also emphasized that despite India's evasive tactics aimed at keeping the Kashmiri people from exercising their right to self-determination, the Security Council resolutions on Kashmir still exist and they will continue to exist as the guiding principle of the solution of Kashmir question.

He reiterated that India tries to hide the notion of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, also not providing access to the international bodies to Kashmir for a fair and neutral assessment of the on-ground situation. He reminded the participants that the fair struggle of people in Namibia, Eritrea, East Timor, and Kosovo has been recognized, hence there is no valid justification of why such an identical struggle of the Kashmiri people may not be recognized. He pressed on the necessity of keeping the Kashmir issue alive while stressing the need to urge the OIC member states to implement their resolutions.