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Report – Roundtable

“Rising State Repression in IIQJK”

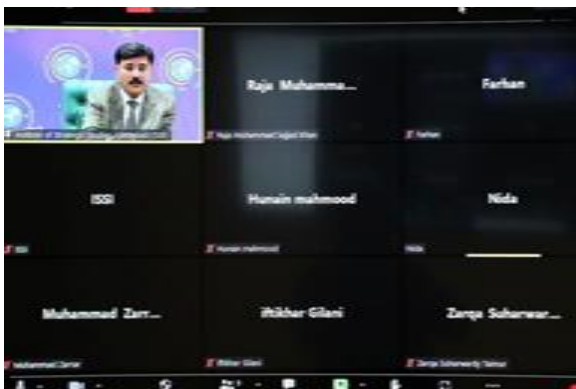
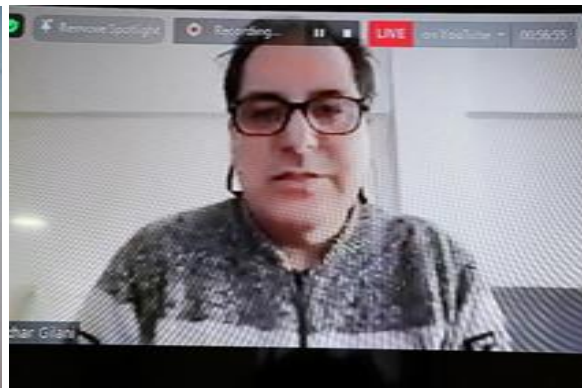
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PICTURES OF THE EVENT



The India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) held a roundtable on “Rising State Repression in IIOJK” in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell, Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, on January 20, 2022. Welcoming the guests, Director ISC Dr. Saif Malik said that ISC is Pakistan's first ever India focused centre that specifically looks into the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that August 5, 2019, brought many changes for the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and has made the lives of people more miserable. In fact, August 5 is Kashmir's 9/11. Referring to the unabated human rights abuses, he wondered how the world that calls itself "civilised" can be sensitised about the situation in IIOJK. He urged the world to pay attention to the ethnic cleansing of the Kashmiri people and said that if the atrocities against the people of Kashmir are not halted, the peace and security of South Asia will remain elusive.

Mr. Ershad Mahmood, Director General Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell was of the view that the human rights conditions in IIOJK are gradually attracting significant international attention. Referring to the report by an international law firm *Stoke White* and other reports by human rights groups, Mr. Ershad said that Amit Shah and Ajeet Doval are key architects of present Kashmir policy that completely rely on excessive use of power and repression to achieve political goals. Although India's human rights record has always been tainted, but during Modi's era, hate speech has been institutionalised in India. Lynching Muslims and Christians has become a normal activity as a group of extremists have taken over the Government of India. He also highlighted the fact that by arresting noted Kashmiri journalists and human rights activists, India is clearly signalling that there is no space for any sort of activism.

Senator Zarqa Suharwardi said that the international community is very much aware of the situation in IIOJK, but that is not enough. The United Nations Human Rights commission issued two reports but right after that, India in a most draconian manner revoked Article 370 and 35 A. She said that under draconian laws that India has imposed in IIOJK, young boys are picked up from their homes and taken to far flung areas without informing their parents and family members. The same is being done with the bodies of shaheeds which are forcibly taken away from families. She suggested that Pakistan should engage international organisations to challenge these draconian laws being practiced in IIOJK and other parts of India. She also informed that

her brainstorming sessions with students across Punjab and Islamabad regarding the Kashmir issue have been very productive.

Mr. Alaf Hussain Wani, Chairman, Kashmir Institute of International Relations suggested that there is much literature available on the human rights violations in IIOJK which needs to be disseminated. This will help in creating more room for Pakistan to denounce India for its massive human rights violations in IIOJK. In this regard, there is a great deal of responsibility on the Government of Pakistan as well as the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Barrister Nida Salam condemned the atrocities and violation of fundamental human rights taking place in IIOJK. She said that enforced disappearance, torture, and rape are against international laws, commitments, and obligations and India is in breach of all of these. On massive human rights abuses, Barrister Nida believed that international community should take action against India. She suggested that since both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers, they should come forward to find a political solution to this issue.

Mr. Raja Muhammad Sajjad, Director Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Cell highlighted three phases in the history of Kashmir conflict i.e., 1947-1989, 1989-2019, and lastly the phase that started on August 5, 2019. This last phase, starting from August 5, 2019, has brought with it many difficulties for the people of IIOJK as India has launched an onslaught on Kashmiri land, culture, language, and civilisation. By putting a strict control on media and arresting journalists, India tries to curb news on the ongoing human rights violations in IIOJK. He suggested that efforts to liberate Kashmir should have started from 1947 when India occupied Kashmir. He also suggested that since India is committing war crimes, cases against Indian atrocities should be initiated in the courts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir which will then help in taking the issue to the international courts.

During the course of discussion, Mr. Iftikhar Gillani said that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) used to meet the Kashmiri prisoners but now that practice has been discontinued by it. He stressed the need for ICRC to resume its engagement with Kashmiris imprisoned within IIOJK or in other parts of India.

Towards the end of the event, Mr. Ershad Mahmood once again stressed the fact that the slow genocide is taking place in IIOJK and the world needs to take serious note of it. The Director ISC Dr. Saif Malik thanked the audience and the speakers for their worthy participation.