**Agriculture or occupation?**

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December 10, 2022

India and Israel are eyeing joint collaboration in the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir, the most recent of which is the construction of two centres of excellence in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). These centres are a part of the Indo-Israel Agriculture Project (IIAP). The State of Jammu and Kashmir has been under illegal occupation by India ever since partition. Israel’s opening of not one but two centres of excellence in the IIOJK is a major issue and a resounding security threat to the annihilated people of the held valley. All the miseries Kashmiris have been going through would now include one more; the world’s second infamous occupying power: Israel right inside this occupied region.

India and Israel have enjoyed a diplomatic relationship since 1992. They have co-operated through military, economic, infrastructural and agricultural projects. Ties deepened when Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited India in 2014 and progressed after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Israel in 2017. In July 2022 leaders of the new I2U2 group met for the first time, virtually. This meeting aimed to address global challenges all while expanding and strengthening ties in the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific. This new Quad offers both India and Israel an opportunity to collaborate on new projects and ventures. An estimated 250,000 Kashmiris have lost their lives during the partition, and 100,000 since 1989. Endless more have been injured, raped, sexually abused/harassed, forced to disappear and tortured. Every family living in Kashmir has been through some sort of abuse or misconduct. Even after their demise, the families have to go through insufferable means just to gain access to their properties and other assets.

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On August 5, 2019, India revoked Kashmir’s special status law (Articles 375 & 35A) that granted Jammu & Kashmir autonomy in 1949. This meant that they would not be part of the Indian Constitution and could construct their laws on all matters except for a few. Both India and Israel assert that they are democratic states yet their actions defy the values they preach to the international community; they have been trading and collaborating in different sectors for many years now.

Indian citizens have been travelling to Israel for decades to study agricultural training. Their momentous project is the establishment of two centres of excellence in IIOJK. The centres would be developed under MASHAV (Israel’s agency for international Development Cooperation) through this project they intend to institute crop diversity, increase productivity and optimise water use efficiency. The project would encompass nursery management, best practices cultivation techniques, irrigation, and fertigation. It is also one of the centre points of the Israel—India Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund, which is co-funded by both governments. While all this that the Indian government is working for may seem like a great strategy that could initiate development in IIOJK, in reality, it goes against international guidelines since Kashmir is a disputed territory.

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Likewise, the first act of military union between the two states was witnessed in 1999 when Israel supplied India with weapons to aid during the Kargil War against Pakistan. India has grown to be one of Israel’s main trading partners. Their trade consists of areas from technology, agriculture, and defence. India is the number one export target of Israel’s defence system manufacturers. The I2U2 bloc is what gives them the strength to cooperate on matters of all nature especially Defence, Economy and Agriculture. Is the world again ready to turn a blind eye towards Kashmir—a population of seven million people would now have to try and survive not under one but two occupying powers? Israel would have full access to the IIOJK—a disputed territory declared by the UN. Israel and India are the world’s two most pronounced nations guilty of various human rights violations working together in an already disputed territory of Muslims. Hence, this involvement could only worsen the already dreadful human rights violation situation in IIOJK. This alliance poses a regional security threat. Pakistan must call attention to the fact that India has been trying to complicate the final settlement of the Kashmir issue.