**World Powers and the Pernicious Acts of India in Kashmir**

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The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights confirmed the human rights of women as an “inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights.” The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action are both outcomes of more than two decades of collective efforts of the international community. Their whole and the sole objective was the empowerment of women.

The changing millennium has established the importance of women in economic, social, cultural and political conditions. And it is a fact that the true development of a society cannot be achieved and is not possible without the full participation and involvement of women in all activities of human society. Violence against women remains a major issue in the development and advancement of women. The violations of women’s rights during all conflicts have remained an issue in the twentieth century and if not corrected, it will surely affect women not only in the twenty-first century but also in the next millennium. The United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNHCHR) issued its report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir on July 8, 2019. The report contains graphic documentation of human rights violations being committed by the Indian military and paramilitary forces in Jammu and Kashmir. This is a significant step towards greater international recognition of the serious abuses committed against Kashmiris at the hands of the Indian army. This report takes the veil of secrecy off of India’s crimes against humanity.

The 49-pages report cites specific incidents where the Indian Government violated the very principles of human decency and democratic freedom against the people of Kashmir. It is well-documented that the bloody occupation has resulted in massive human rights violations, particularly targeting women and children. The sanctity of women has been violated, in a gruesome and unforgiving fashion. The UN report upholds that [In the 2013 report on her mission to India, the ‘Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women,’ its causes and consequences, said, “[W]omen living in militarized regions, such as Jammu and Kashmir and the north-eastern states, live in a constant state of siege and surveillance, whether in their homes or public. Information received through both written and oral testimonies highlighted the use of mass rape, allegedly by members of the State security forces, as well as acts of enforced disappearance, killings and acts of torture and ill-treatment, which were used to intimidate and to counteract political opposition and insurgency.”]

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The United Nations report further illustrates that, “One significant case that illustrates the state’s failure to investigate and prosecute allegations of sexual violence and addressing impunity for sexual crimes in Kashmir is the Kunan-Poshpora mass rape, which took place 27 years ago and for which attempts to seek justice have been denied and blocked over the years by the authorities at different levels. According to survivors and a local administration official, on the night of 23 February 1991, soldiers from the 4 Rajputana Rifles regiment of the Indian Army gang-raped around 23 women of Kunan and Poshpora villages of Kupwara district. The Indian Army and Government of India have denied the allegations” “Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora” documentary is evidence of five brave Kashmiri women scholars, who wrote these words on page 1, “This book is about one night in two villages in Kashmir. It is about a night that has refused to end for 24 long years, a night that holds stories of violations, injustice, oppression and falsehood, as well as acts of courage, bravery and truth. This book is about Kunan Poshpora.”

Dr Nazir Gilani, President JKCHR said in a written statement submitted to the UN Secretary-General during the 58th session of HRC, “The issues of Kashmiri women have multiplied ever since. The Kunan Poshpora rape case of 1991 and the issue of half-widows (women whose husbands are missing and cannot re-marry) have continued to remain unresolved.”

The suggestion made by Dr Nazir Gilani is very pertinent when he said, “It is high time that Human Rights Council addresses the question of sexual violence committed against Kashmiri women as detailed in Paras 125 to 133 of OHCHR Report of 14 June 2018. The Kunan-Poshpora mass rape victims have not received any justice for the past 30 years. Many of the victims have died while waiting for justice.”

How many Kashmiri women have to be dishonoured before one concludes that a human rights violation has taken place? This is one of the questions that are on the minds of millions of Kashmiri women. Please remember that these women live under the stranglehold of a 900,000 strong army of occupation. These women are not oblivious to world events. They know that in welcoming the appointment of a “Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women,” the Vienna Declaration declared that “the human rights of women are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of the universal human rights.” They wonder what action was taken by this Rapporteur, whose mandate included action on “state-sponsored violence against women.” They waited with hope because the same document had asked the United Nations human rights body to “strengthen mechanisms or accountability to ensure that governments take steps to end discrimination and punish perpetrators of violence against them.” (Reference UN documents: E/CN/4/1995/NGO/28, and /5).

These violated Kashmiri women ask: what action has been taken to enforce the writ of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women? Are these reports and revelations not enough to shake the conscience of the world powers and the Human Rights Council? The perpetrator of this state policy, India, has the temerity to sit not only in the Human Rights Council but also in the Security Council. Why does the international community not condemn India? During the years of suffering in Jammu and Kashmir, despite some intermittent and half-hearted efforts, the situation has worsened. And why has that been so? Because the response of the international community to the predicament of Kashmiri people has been essentially weak and lacking in credibility. It is equally true that the United Nations’ mechanisms do not effectively address massive human rights violations. In the situations of armed conflicts and civil strife, it is the innocent people who are killed and brutalized.

On behalf of the women and children of the world who continue to be innocent victims, we hope that the Platform of Action suggests the implementation of a special program to rehabilitate the women and children of all conflicts in all situations. And, in particular, the women of Kashmir still have confidence in the mechanism of the United Nations and its sense of justice. But there are limits even to hope. We are often assailed by despair because of the half-hearted response of the international community to our tragic situation. Unfortunately, the indifference, the inaction, the passivity and the silence of the United Nations, of course unintentionally, have given a sense of impunity to the occupation authority in Kashmir.

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