**A resilient Geelani**

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Born in Bandipora village and brought up in Sopore of Kashmir, Geelani completed his higher education from Oriental College Lahore, with a focus on various languages and an author to at least 34 books. He has translated Allama Iqbal’s Persian work into the Urdu language.

The lifetime chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and former head of Jamaat-e-Islami and Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, he has been under house arrest for the last 11 years, with different ailments including kidney problems, a heart ailment and bronchitis; one of his kidneys and gallbladder were removed recently. The pro-freedom leader of Kashmir is seen as an icon of the Kashmir movement with a former PM of Pakistan calling him the “beacon of freedom for the people of Jammu and Kashmir” and a staunch opponent of a union with India.

A staunch pro-Pakistani leader, he did not believe in the idea of an independent Kashmir, although according to him independence is preferable over “Indian imperialism”. He was an ideologue who believed Kashmir should be an Islamic state within a theocratic Pakistan. Geelani was seen as ideologically living in Pakistan while in Indian territory. With over two decades behind bars, Geelani was detained for the first time in 1962. Geelani personally believed in a political solution of the Kashmir dispute but praised local freedom fighters who are fighting with the occupational forces. He also led the funeral in absentia of Shaheed Afzal Guru, who was hanged by the Indian government in Tihar jail in 2013 in Eidgah Srinagar.

[PM Imran urges int’l community to support Afghans to rebuild their country](https://nation.com.pk/05-Sep-2021/pm-imran-urges-int-l-community-to-support-afghans-to-rebuild-their-country)

When other Hurriyat leaders softened their approach towards Delhi, Geelani remained firm on his stance and broke away with the Hurriyat Conference and formed a separate party named Tehreek-e Hurriyat which demanded that Kashmir must be recognised as a disputed territory, and the dispute must be resolved by a plebiscite held according to the resolutions passed by the United Nations in 1948.

A senior Indian journalist, Yoginder Sikand, who has conducted extensive research on Jamaat-e-Islami, Syed Ali Geelani, and Indian Muslims wrote, “unlike other noted Kashmiri Muslim leaders, he is regarded as ‘honest’, ‘committed’, to have never compromised on his stance on freedom from India. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that he is regarded by many Kashmiri Muslims as the unparalleled icon of their resistance to Indian rule” (Azadi! Syed Ali Shah Gilani and the Movement for Political Self-Determination for Jammu and Kashmir by Yoginder Sikand).

[Hamas calls for protests against settler incursions into Al-Aqsa](https://nation.com.pk/05-Sep-2021/hamas-calls-for-protests-against-settler-incursions-into-al-aqsa)

He survived 12 assassination attempts in the past 20 years, was a staunch supporter of the two-nation theory, who believed in the complete merger of the Jammu and Kashmir State with Pakistan. Former IB and RAW chief, Amarjit Singh Dulat, considered SAS Geelani as “bad news” for India.

He was said to be very close to the Pakistani government but did not shy away from criticising Pakistani policies regarding Kashmir, especially the Kargil episode. While commenting on the Kargil situation he said that while Pakistan had been supporting “the indigenous struggle of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, morally, diplomatically and politically...this does not mean Pakistan can take a decision on our behalf”.

Geelani is the only Kashmiri leader who confronted the Pakistani president Gen Parvez Musharraf and rejected his 4-point formula and even said that Musharraf “lost self-confidence”, while addressing a press conference in Srinagar.

For many young Kashmiri people, Geelani was compared to Omar Mukhtar, the Libyan freedom fighter who fought Italian occupiers in Libya, who never compromised.