**Kashmir at a tipping point**

[**Saad Sultan**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/saad-sultan)

March 02, 2021

As Pakistan observes Kashmir day this month, Kashmiris in the Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOK) are living in an unprecedented and appalling condition. While Kashmiris in the IIOK have been target of barbaric human rights abuses for decades, the revocation of the Article 370 and 35A in August 2019 by the Hindu fundamentalist BJP party has put the existence of Kashmiri nation into jeopardy.

The Kashmiris have been in the worst form of lockdown since August 2019 as they are completely cut-off from the rest of the world and are deprived of even basic freedoms such as communicating with their beloved ones outside Kashmir. This, coupled with the ongoing human rights abuses in the Kashmir valley, is having a detrimental physical and psychological effect on Kashmiris. The physical human rights abuses are often mentioned, but it is imperative to emphasise the negative psychological effect the current turmoil is having on Kashmiris. If Kashmiris, especially the children with fragile minds, are under constant pressure, fear and anxiety, it can severely damage them psychologically. It is ironic that while in most countries there are strict laws to not display any kind of violence in children’s movies or cartoons; the Kashmiri children witness violence in their everyday lives.

[Zlatan Ibrahimović to miss Man Utd Europa League due to injury](https://nation.com.pk/02-Mar-2021/zlatan-ibrahimovi-to-miss-man-utd-europa-league-due-to-injury)

The abrogation of the Article 35A has consequently given rights to Indians to buy property in the IIOK, which could lead to demographic changes in the region. The Hindu extremist BJP, backed by RSS, has exuded its anti-Muslim stance emphatically in the past and present; whether it be the demolishing the historic Babri Masjid, the massacre of Muslims in 2002 Gujrat riots, or the most recent anti-Muslim violence in Delhi. In addition, the passing of the discriminatory Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 was the first time that religion had been overtly used as criteria for citizenship in Indian law. Not only has this nullified India’s prolonged claim that ideological basis for the creation of India was secularism, it can be perilous for the future of Kashmiri Muslims who are in majority in the region at the moment.

While Urdu had been the official language of IIOK for more than 100 years, last year the Indian Union government passed the bill to introduce Hindi and Dogri as official languages too. It is evident in South Asian history that Urdu has always been seen as ‘Language of Muslims’, especially as many religious scriptures were written in Urdu. The attempt by the government to erode Urdu in the IIOK is undermining Islam in IIOK. Moreover, there have been attacks on the culture of Kashmiris as well, such as the ban of traditional Kashmiri attire, pheran. Destroying a nation’s culture is like killing a nation without a bullet because culture is an identity of a nation.

[ECP to make final decision regarding ballot papers today](https://nation.com.pk/02-Mar-2021/ecp-to-make-final-decision-regarding-ballot-papers-today)

While the present situation in the IIOK is deplorable for Kashmiris, there are still some factors which could be instrumental in ameliorating the condition of Kashmiris, who are under a long-standing tyranny of India. Firstly, India has been recently engaged in a border dispute with China, where the troops of both countries have had aggressive face-offs and skirmishes along the Sino-Indian border as well as clashes along Eastern Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Moreover, India is currently facing internal unrest as tens of thousands of farmers are protesting in New Delhi. India can be pressurised by Pakistan and the international community to sit on the negotiating table to discuss the Kashmir issue. In the present situation, rationally, India would not want to fight from both of its borders—LAC and LoC—as well as controlling the internal unrest at the same time. It is preposterous that at one end while India aims to make advancements like reaching the moon but on the other side it refuses to even sit on the negotiating table with Pakistan to discuss the intractable Kashmir issue which has put the lives of millions of Kashmiris at stake.

[MQM-P to support PTI in Senate elections: Amin-ul-Haque](https://nation.com.pk/01-Mar-2021/mqm-p-to-support-pti-in-senate-elections-amin-ul-haque)

For Pakistan, the present time brings some optimism in resolving the Kashmir dispute politically. Pakistan’s current Prime Minister Imran Khan has got a dynamic personality, which has earned him immense global reputation recently. It would definitely not be easy for Imran Khan given the inherent complications of this long-standing conflict, but in the present time Imran Khan is the only leader in Pakistan who possesses the potential to bring a substantial positive change for Kashmiris in the IIOK.

To the dismay of Kashmiris, they did not get enough international support after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. However, now there seems to be some international support, especially when last month UK MPs debated the situation in Kashmir in the House of Commons and several MPs agreed to the brutal treatment of Kashmiris in the IIOK. British MP Debbie Abrahams also wrote a letter to UK premier Boris Johnson to take a note of the grave human rights abuses in IIOK.

[UN Syria commission calls for immediate cease-fire](https://nation.com.pk/01-Mar-2021/un-syria-commission-calls-for-immediate-cease-fire)

2021 could be a life-changing year for Kashmiris as they are currently living in a vale of tears and the current Hindu nationalist BJP government poses a dire threat to the Kashmiri identity. On the positive side, Pakistan and the international community can take advantage of India’s current unstable position to pressurise it to negotiate on the Kashmir Issue. Pakistan should come up with a defined and clear strategy pertaining to the dispute. A more robust, organised and aggressive international lobbying by Pakistan could be a good starting point. However, to bring any major change, Pakistan would perhaps have to do much more than that.