**Stand Up for the Righteousness**

[Amna Ejaz Rafi](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/amna-ejaz-rafi/" \o "More Articles by Amna Ejaz Rafi)

August 4, 2022

India revoked Articles 370 and 35-A in the valley of Kashmir on August 5. The illegal attempts altered the special status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK). Once again, it was a denial of Kashmiris’ Right to Self-Determination and an outright violation of UN Security Council resolutions. These unilateral actions by India are a blow to freedom of speech and free will. It foretells that justice and the right to live are just bookish thoughts, and on the ground, it is the power, which defines the political path. India bypassed the UN Security Council resolutions and Human rights laws by simply changing the status-quo of the occupied territory. Ironically, no authority questioned the illegal move as India had the military force to suppress the voice of the people. Over 576 Kashmiris have been martyred by the Indian troops. The people of IIOJK have been living under curfew with no access to the outside world. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Vice Chairman, Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar has called the Indian actions in IIOJK “a direct attack on Kashmir’s unique identity, culture, employment, demography and basic fundamental rights.” The story of Kashmiris is one of inhumane tragedy wherein the people have been stripped of their rights by a so-called democratic and secular dispensation.

Three years have passed since the unlawful assault on the lives of the Kashmiri people in IIOJK took place. The environment has been further toughened for the people. On July 30, 2022, a Kashmiri youth was martyred in the Baramulla district. In June, three Kashmiri youth were martyred in Kupwara and Baramulla districts. This speaks of the barbaric acts of Indian troops in IIOJK. Youth from areas of Patitohalan, Shopian Doda, Kishtwar, Ramban and Budgam districts have also been arrested. The strategy to target the youth is to play with the nerves of the elderly and to weaken the will of the people. How painful is to see a son being tortured. Dreadful times in IIOJK. The brutal acts of suppression committed by the Indian Army find no parallel in modern history since the times of Nazi Germany. Stoke White Investigation (SWI) report titled: “India’s War Crimes in Kashmir: Violence, Dissent and the War on Terror,” confirms 450 cases of torture, 100 cases of enforced disappearances, and 1500 cases of pellet gun victims and 30 cases of sexual violence in IIOJK.

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As per the UN Resolutions – August 13, 1948, and January 5, 1949, the Kashmiris were given the right of self-determination, which has time and again been reneged by India. The government of India is also a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR prohibits torture and other forms of cruelty, and inhumane and degrading treatment. Articles 4 and 7 of the ICCPR explicitly ban torture, even in times of national emergency or when the security of a state is threatened. However, the ongoing situation in IIOJK is a practical manifestation of Hindu fascism, wherein the Kashmiris are being deprived of their civil and political rights. Another angle to the Kashmir story is the sacrifice and defiance of its people, how they have battled injustice and torture, and have stood for their right to self-determination. It speaks of the resilience of the Kashmiri people and, of course, their valour. It shows that the will of people is undefeatable.

The dispute in Kashmir requires a political and democratic solution. Geo-economics is the way to go in the region, and India is regressing the trend by hoodwinking realities in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. In light of the evolving regional trends, Peoples Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti has called for “declaring the occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Azad Jammu and Kashmir as a world peace zone. She has asked India for connecting IIOJK with the world in the same manner, Pakistan and China are connecting the AJK.” It is a moment of realization for India.

*The writer is a Research Associate (Islamabad Policy Research Institute)*