**Kashmir and Palestine a tale of two subjugations**

[Nawazish Ali](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/nawazish-ali/)

April 21, 2021

There are several comparisons between Kashmir dispute and Palestine crisis; both date back to 1947-48; civilian casualties are very high as a result of vicious occupations; despite repression and oppression Kashmiris and Palestinians stand tall and they refuse to bow; and UNSC has passed numerous resolutions acknowledging the right to self-determination of Kashmiris and a separate state for Palestinians. In both cases, occupying forces violate human rights, alter the demographic structure, and pose a threat to ‘world peace and security’.

The deal that was on offer 70 years ago would have given the Palestinians a much bigger homeland than what they are now offered or left with, since Israel has established more and yet more illegal settlements in territory that it has occupied. India, in turn, has bitten the bullet and scrapped two crucial Articles of the Indian Constitution through which the people of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir had special rights. Local politicians now ask for a restoration of the status quo ante, which they won’t get.

The racist and unjust laws India has been enacting lately are similar to the racist laws Israel has been applying in Palestine for decades. From 1954 to 5 August 2019, Kashmir had a special status under the Indian Constitution which allowed it to enact its own laws, have a separate flag and a Constitution. Those provisions also barred outsiders from settling in and owning land in Kashmir territory, but these were revoked by the government of India last year. Experts say that with the new domicile laws New Delhi is imposing a settler-colonial project mirroring that of Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands. It is a blatant attempt to colonise Kashmir and populate it with new and old colonisers to make Kashmir’s indigenous citizens a minority in their homeland.

The Palestinian Authority’s governance norms are poorer compared with that of Israel. Similarly, Jammu and Kashmir’s governments have long been a byword for sloth, incompetence, and corruption

The racist and unjust laws India has been enacting lately are similar to the racist laws Israel had been applying in Palestine for decades. Indian state functionaries themselves have spoken of this well-thought-out Israeli-style solution for Kashmir. It is certainly a settler colonialism project with tragic consequences for Kashmiris to it. The changes in domicile law may disenfranchise thousands of non-resident Kashmiri Muslims, as well as tens of thousands of Muslims who were exiled from the region since 1947 to Pakistan and elsewhere.

A great many Kashmiris in the valley dreamt of an “azaadi” (freedom) whose definition changed from one phase to the next and from one person to the next. Some thought of complete political independence along with a merger with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, others of outright merger with Pakistan, and yet others of an irredentist reversion to radical autonomy, with the state having its own flag, currency, and prime minister. The people have lived in a state of denial, refusing to accept the blunt fact that resorting to violence against an infinitely superior force is suicidal. It is, of course, true that people driven to desperation will turn to violence, no matter how futile. But it is no less true that they have suffered in the bargain from the excesses of quasi-police states, and also that both have ended up with less than what they might have got away with once upon a time if their aspirations had been tinged with greater realism.

There is another lesson to be learnt, or question that waits for an answer. The Palestine authority’s governance norms always poorer compared with that of Israel. Jammu and Kashmir’s governments have long been a byword for sloth, incompetence, and corruption; though its people are on average much better off than in the rest of India. How much of the loss of relative power, in some cases of legitimacy, and of autonomous volition, flows from such internal failures? Do the people in these places have it in themselves?

Kashmir was handed over from an unpopular ruler without the legitimacy of popular vote to the Indian state on October 26, 1947. A complaint of that accession is the United Nations resolution of 1948 for referendum or plebiscite, never facilitated by the Indian state. Since the 1990s, through decades of armed struggle against the Indian state, state violence in Kashmir has taken its toll. Torture, rape, sexual violence, enforced disappearances, and extra-judicial killings are widespread. These human rights violations are intricately linked to the denial of political sovereignty for Kashmiris.

Israel and India certainly inaugurated the colonial occupations of Palestine and Kashmir. Has India learnt it from Israel? People in South Asia are not alien to the types of atrocities committed by the Israeli forces against the unarmed Palestinians. India has been employing similar tactics and techniques against unarmed Kashmiri protestors in the Occupied Valley.

When one observes the methods and tactics employed by Indian forces in Kashmir, one can find several similarities between the Indian and Israeli tactics. This can be due to enhancement of strategic partnership between India and Israel since beginning of 1990s. The military partnership between India and Israel is something which is of great concern of Kashmiris. India has acquired state of the art weaponry from Israel which it has used frequently to suppress civilian protests in Kashmir. Various reports indicate that India has employed similar Israeli tactics in Occupied Kashmir. Anti-riot tactics, indiscriminate use of force and massive employment of forces to simply suppress peaceful protests, all these similarities indicate that India is following in the footsteps of its strategic partner Israel.

We live in a time when nation-states overtly commit war crimes but are cheered on by the bloodthirsty majoritarian citizens, and literally get away with it. The word democracy glitters like fool’s gold on the tongues of world leaders. Human rights regimes seem toothless in the face of the bold barbarisms of nation-states invested in repressing democracy, and need reform if they are to deliver justice. Transnational solidarity and activism are urgent when almost every nation-state seems to be a rogue state. Joining the dots between the occupations of Kashmir and Palestine shows the need for a greater solidarity between these two sovereignty struggles for achieving the ultimate goals and objectives.

*The writer is a retired Pakistan army officer*