



ALL PARTIES HURRIYAT CONFERENCE

Jammu & Kashmir

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Excellency,

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As the Religious Head(Mirwaiz) of Kashmiri People and Chairman of The All Parties Hurriyat Conference, I believe that a war is being waged against us by the ‘democratic’ Indian state, in total violation of all democratic norms. The security machinery of India has embarked upon the strategy of ruthlessly crushing us and our resistance to its unprecedented brutality.

There are not too many choices and options available to us. The expectation that the society remain passive or non-violent in the midst of this brutalization is unrealistic. The younger population of the state has been on the streets for the past one-and-half months, with fatal consequences.

As I write to you, the present phase of the unceasing and unprecedented violence in Kashmir is over forty days old. Now a sense of extreme urgency has built up due to the inexplicable lack of response from the international community to this explosive human tragedy. Why is the international community being a mute spectator? Is it awaiting some even more massive human tragedy to unfold in Kashmir before voicing their indignation? Aren’t 69 killings in less than 40 days, with over 6,000 youngsters and children injured – mostly blinded and maimed – enough for the consciousness of the international community to be stirred?

The Indian Central Reserve Police has itself admitted in court to using 1.3 million pellets in 32 days in Kashmir. The indiscriminate and heartless use of the pellet gun at point-blank range on teenagers, with devastating consequences, has elicited enough negative reactions in editorials in Indian mainstream media.

The entire population of the Valley is barricaded inside their homes. Mobile phones and internet connectivity has been disconnected. The Press has been gagged. Journalists are attacked and harassed on a daily basis. Families are in intense distress without information about their loved ones. Hospitals have been attacked and ambulance drivers shot at with grave consequences for expectant mothers and those needing emergency medical attention. Essential supplies have been blocked, and media operations banned.

What is restraining the international community from speaking out against this extraordinary breach of democratic norms and humanitarian impulses? Is it some geo-political strategic imperatives or is it the lure of the Indian market or is it misinformation that is keeping the international community silent?

Kashmir is akin to a tinder box at present, with extreme volatility in the political situation and without timely international intervention the consequences are bound to be ghastly. The Indian state is also making the citizens of India complicit in this brutality by obfuscating and denying them information. There is an embargo on information coming out from Kashmir. Social network sites like Facebook have been forced to remove vital information from their

sites under pressure from Indian netizens. No international human rights organization is being allowed into Kashmir for fear of exposure.

All attempts at dialogue fail because the Indian state is intransigent and insists Kashmir is its integral part – no matter if it has to kill all Kashmiris for that. They are not prepared to listen to Kashmiris. It has been an endless struggle and every time we confront a dead end.

The Indian PM attempts to delegitimize our long term struggle – which began even before India's struggle for freedom – by equating it with terrorism, through an irresponsible and false discourse. Unfortunately, the Indian state constructs its foreign policy on this bluster. 9/11 provided the Indian state an excuse to put the Kashmir struggle under the rubric of terror. In the post 9/11 Islamophobic environment it fits well with the broader narrative. Kashmir happens to be a Muslim majority territory and India is using it as a pretext to demonize a people as terrorists and miscreants.

We appeal to the international community and to civil society that you cannot remain silent spectators to what is happening in Kashmir. You have to care and intervene and stop this slide into brutality, which might soon be generating another wave of refugees fleeing to the West to escape local annihilation. The human cost of this conflict is immense. It is not about India and Pakistan but about this tiny dot on the world map – Kashmir – and its insignificant inhabitants. Their lives and their future are at stake.

The issue in Kashmir is primarily about the people of Kashmir and their right to self-determination. Our struggle is rooted in a quest for justice and dignity. We are the victims of sustained aggression from a democratic state, which uses primarily un-democratic ways to extinguish our right to self-determination.

If we are to see economic prosperity and development, education and progress, peace and security in South Asia, it becomes imperative that the international community take this seriously and be proactive in appraising themselves of the ground reality in Kashmir and use their good offices to get this issue on the table for an imaginative solution.

This is a call for help to find a solution to this seemingly intractable problem which is taking a massive human toll. India and Pakistan cannot and are not able to do this on their own.

H.E.Pope Fransis
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