

Kashmir, India and Human Rights

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It is one year since the Indian government revoked article 370 of their constitution, thus rendering Kashmir an oppressed colony of India. This is not to imply that Kashmiris enjoyed any semblance of independence prior to August 5 of 2019, but the new order reduces them to a colonized people with no rights, and extreme oppression.

This writer interviewed a human-rights activist in Kashmir for this article. In order to protect him, his name will not be revealed here. But the information he provided is shocking, and must be heard.

Kashmir is now the [most militarized zone in the world](#), with approximately 700,000 soldiers to patrol and enforce repression on a population of 13,000,000. That means that each soldier is monitoring the activities of less than 20 people. This, of course, prevents the Kashmiris of ever putting from their minds even for a moment the terrible, repressive conditions under which they are forced to live.

Covid-19 is taking a tragic toll in Kashmir as it is in many parts of the world. But the lockdown caused by the pandemic is only an extension of that enforced after August 5 of 2019. Students have now lost a full year of education, a basic human right, the violation of which is generally ignored by the world community.

The deprivation of their right to education is only one of the many human-rights violations Kashmiris are experiencing on a daily basis. The following violations are commonplace in Kashmir; this list is not exhaustive, but demonstrates some of the more egregious violations:

- [Extra-judicial killings](#). Indian soldiers kill unarmed and defenseless Kashmiris with complete impunity. In the last year, at least 200 Kashmiris have been killed by Indian soldiers without benefit of charges or trial.
- Journalist and others experience torture at the hands of Indian officials. Muslims, in this predominately Muslim nation, are especially vulnerable. [“IOK \(Indian-Occupied Kashmir\) is now known as the ‘biggest jail’ for Muslims where bloodshed and torture is common.”](#)
- [Excessive force](#): “The United Nations’ Special Rapporteurs have expressed “grave concern” over the “alleged excessive use of force, torture and other forms of ill-treatment reportedly committed” during [arrests and detentions in Jammu and Kashmir](#) since August 2019.”
- [Illegal and arbitrary detention](#). “A report was sent to the Indian government on May 4 over “the continued deterioration of human rights conditions” in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, documenting several cases of “arbitrary detentions, violations to the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment and rights of

persons belonging to minorities.”

These and other shocking and brutal violations are every-day occurrences for Kashmiris; they are extensively documented but, somehow, the international community turns a blind eye toward them.

People throughout the world have family and friends in Kashmir; for several months they were unable to contact them due to the [Indian-imposed Internet blockade](#), one of the longest such blockades ever imposed anywhere in the world. Although that has been lifted, the high-speed internet services blocked by India have not been restored, making communication via internet extremely difficult.

In addition to leaving people unable to communicate regularly with loved ones, this low-speed internet has wider implications. [It has negatively impacted the economy](#), since many businesses rely on internet usage to communicate with their customers and suppliers. Students who are unable to attend school cannot rely on online classes, an alternative that much of the world is experiencing due to the pandemic. Healthcare services are negatively affected, because people can't get the information they need to prevent infection, or deal with it if they have it.

Although Kashmir has been a colony of India for seventy years, during which time the Kashmiris were deprived of basic human rights, what the people are seeing now is a threat to the very existence of their country. As the journalist said: “A situation akin to what is happening in West Bank in Palestine is slowly emerging in Kashmir and this has meant Kashmiris will be at the receiving end of violence.” Indeed, at least one Indian official said that the government will use the ‘Israel’ model, to destroy Kashmir. **Sandeep Chakravorty**, who is India's consul general in New York, [said the following](#), in relation to Kashmir Hindus who left the country after a rebellion against Indian rule in 1989:

“I believe the security situation will improve, it will allow the refugees to go back, and in your lifetime, you will be able to go back ... and you will be able to find security, because we already have a model in the world. I don't know why we don't follow it. It has happened in the [Middle East](#). If the Israeli people can do it, we can also do it.”

Yes, if the Israelis can violate international law and basic human rights with impunity, why not India? The government of India has already demonstrated through decades of oppression that it holds human rights and international law in contempt, and the world community has tacitly, by not speaking out forcefully against such atrocities, condoned these unspeakable violations.

Much of the world is understandably preoccupied with the coronavirus pandemic, but world leaders should be able to address more than once crisis at a time. One can forget any assistance from the United States, where the increasingly erratic president **Donald Trump** sees no value to himself personally in addressing the ongoing Indian atrocities against Kashmir, and if any action won't directly shine a light on him, he isn't interested. But what of other powerful nations? What of China and Russia? What of the European Union and its member nations? The example of one powerful nation being able to impose its colonial will on another must be stopped. Those governments who ignore what is happening in Kashmir

and in Palestine may find their nations, at some future date, threatened by a more powerful country, and perhaps then, no one will come to their aid.

It is long past time for the nations of the world, and the United Nations as a world body, to stop paying lip service to the concepts of self-determination, equal rights and international law. The time to act is now.

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