

## **Kashmir: the Blind Spot of World Conscience**

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The Kashmir issue has been on the international agenda since 1947 and numerous resolutions have been passed by the United Nations confirming that 'the question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite'. Lack of progress between two nations in fulfilling pledge 'to put an end to conflict and confrontation' and establish a 'durable peace in the sub-continent' has meant that the United Nations remains a concerned party even after the Simla agreement of 1972. The office of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon has confirmed that the United Nations is ready to mediate between India and Pakistan for resolution of the issue. The resolutions adopted by EU in 2005 and 2007 about EU-India relations emphasized international concern over the situation in Jammu & Kashmir. In 2008, the EU put forward a resolution regarding the discovery of mass graves and strongly condemned 'the unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, torture, rape and other human rights abuses which have occurred in Jammu & Kashmir'. In February 2013, the OIC requested the government of India to allow international human rights groups to visit Kashmir. In addition, numerous human rights organizations have condemned the widespread abuses throughout the region, Amnesty International being among the most prolific in its issuance of reports regarding human rights abuses by Indian soldiers.

The issue remains unresolved, the tendency being for other trouble spots in the world to take precedence; this has led to a growing unease that Kashmir has become a 'blind spot' of the world's conscience. This apprehension needs to be addressed urgently. Firstly because the dispute of Jammu & Kashmir, between two already hostile neighbors, has the potential to re-ignite tensions. This would cause immense sufferings to the inhabitants of entire region. Secondly because India and Pakistan are both declared nuclear powers and have enough nuclear warheads for mutual self-destruction, a fact sometimes lost on pro-nuclear strike enthusiasts, who seem to think they are talking about using a big bomb. Thirdly because of the dangerous rhetoric which exists on television, radio, newspapers and now, in social media. Since 1947, generations have been brought up to distrust, dislike, and hate their neighbor, principally because of the hard-feelings which exist over Kashmir together with the latent trauma over partition.

Fourthly, the Kashmir issue must not be considered a blind spot because of the tremendous suffering that has been endured by the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The demand for freedom that started as a political movement but turned into armed struggle has had dire consequences. An estimated 100,000 have died over the past thirty years, mostly young men, at least 10,000 disappeared which leaves an equivalent number of 'half widows', thousands of orphans, thousands women have been tortured and raped. The region remains militarized, people cannot be certain of going to a court of law and getting justice. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) means that the authorities have right to arrest and hold anyone suspected of 'terrorist' activities. Fifthly because of resources, it is impossible to quantify how much money has been spent in terms of military defense for conventional and nuclear weapons which both countries can ill afford. In conclusion, these reasons are sufficient to indicate why, pending resolution of the 'dispute' over Jammu and Kashmir, it remains important that international bodies continue to take notice of the situation. In solving the issue consultation with those whose lives are directly affected is also necessary.