

Your Excellencies,

We understand that you recently participated in a visit to Jammu and Kashmir organized by the Government of India. After the Indian government's sponsored and severely restricted trip of right-wing European Parliamentarians, this is the first similarly organized visit of foreign dignitaries since the siege of Kashmir began on August 5, 2019.

We wish to express our concern that your visit was designed to convey a sense of normalcy about Kashmir, a normalcy that in reality is nonexistent for the people of Kashmir. It is curious that you were invited to visit the Valley when Indian parliamentarians from the opposition have repeatedly been denied their request for visits to make a firsthand assessment of the situation. Indian lawmakers have called your visit a "farfical exercise aimed at distorting reality." To date, India has also refused entry to foreign journalists and independent human rights workers to Kashmir. In spite of the recent Supreme Court verdict on the right to communicate on the internet being a fundamental human right, the Court has failed to restore this right to Kashmiris. This longest recorded shut down has caused enormous losses in business, disrupted various aspects of everyday life, including education, and medical care. Curbs of freedom of the press and freedom of expression and freedom of assembly remain in place.

We are very concerned that your trip was organized by the government of India to legitimize their illegal and unilateral actions in an internationally disputed territory. Since August 5, when India revoked the special status of Kashmir and divided the state into two union territories, there has been a five-and-a-half month siege in place. So far there have been seven on the ground fact finding reports conducted by Indian civil society groups and concerned citizens, (Report 1, -Report 2,- Report 3, Report 4,- Report 5,- Report 6,- Report 7) all uniformly disturbing, documenting: mass detentions of elected officials, doctors, lawyers, and children as young as 12; use of torture and lethal force against civilians; dwindling supplies of life-saving medical treatments and inability of patients to access hospitals; curtailing of religious freedoms; economic and ecological destruction; land grabs; collective punishment of millions of Kashmiris; and demographic change.

To truly assess the situation in Kashmir, we strongly urge you to meet members of both the Indian and Kashmiri civil society groups who have prepared these on-site reports. Such conversations will help you make an informed and unbiased assessment of the ongoing oppression of Kashmiris and the impact of the current siege of Kashmir.

As scholars of Kashmir, we wish to ensure that you have all the right information and support in making an unbiased assessment of the situation in Kashmir. It is also important to ask the government of India the right questions. Here are some of our suggestions:

1. Under what provisions has India unilaterally altered the status of an internationally disputed territory without the will or consent of the people?
2. What legal basis is present for the siege and communications blockade?
3. What is the legal basis under which journalists and human rights workers are denied free movement?
4. What is the legal basis under which thousands of Kashmiri politicians, journalists, members of civil society, human rights defenders and youth have been detained?
5. What measures have been taken to inform the family members of reportedly detained individuals about their fate and whereabouts?
6. What measures have been taken to ensure that any interference in the right to peaceful assembly in Kashmir is in accordance with the law?
7. What is the legal basis of arrest and torture of tens of thousands of boys and teenagers?
8. Has the government of India initiated investigations in compliance with human rights standards of promptness, impartiality and independence, following alleged violations of human rights law enforcement operations in Jammu and Kashmir?
9. What measures have been taken to ensure that human rights defenders in India are able to carry out peaceful and legitimate work in a safe and enabling environment without fear of threats or acts of intimidation and harassment of any sort?

Above all, we hope that you will make every effort to encourage India to engage in a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute by allowing the people of Kashmir to express their will, and determine their future. To help you understand the history and present-day forms of the Kashmir conflict, we direct your attention to resources we have put together.

Here is a brief fact sheet on the history and the current siege. We have also put forward a resource for possible resolution of the Kashmir issue and a response to commonly forwarded justifications for the current changes to the status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sincerely,

Kashmir Scholars Advocacy and Consultative Network

Dean Accardi, Assistant Professor of History, Connecticut College, USA

Raja Qaiser Ahmad, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Binish Ahmed, Ph.D. Candidate, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada

Omer Aijazi, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Toronto, Canada

Dibyesh Anand, Professor of International Relations, University of Westminster, UK

Mirza Saaib Beg, Lawyer, London, UK

Mona Bhan, Associate Professor of Anthropology and the Ford Maxwell Professor of South Asian Studies, Syracuse University, USA

Emma Brännlund, Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, University of the West of England (UWE Bristol), UK

Farhan Mujahid Chak, Associate Professor, Qatar University, Qatar

Huma Dar, Adjunct Professor, California College of Arts, USA

Haley Duschinski, Associate Professor, Ohio University, USA

Iffat Fatima, Filmmaker, India

Mohammed Tahir Ganie, Assistant Professor, School of Law and Government, Dublin City University, Ireland

Javaid Hayat Khan, Ph. D. Independent Researcher and Analyst, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Serena Hussain, Associate Professor, Coventry University, UK

Khushdeep Kaur, Ph.D. Candidate, Temple University, USA

Shrimoyee Nandini Ghosh, Lawyer and Legal Researcher, India

Mohamad Junaid, Assistant Professor, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, USA

Hafsa Kanjwal, Assistant Professor of History, Lafayette College, USA

Fathima Kanth, Ph.D. Candidate, University of California, San Diego, USA

Ain Ul Khair, Ph.D. Candidate, International Relations, Central European University, Hungary

Nitasha Kaul, Associate Professor, University of Westminster, UK

Suvir Kaul, A.M. Rosenthal Professor, Department of English, University of Pennsylvania, USA

Zunaira Komal, Ph.D. Candidate, University of California, Davis, USA

Fozia Nazir Lone, Associate Professor of International Law, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Laura Lucia Notaro, Consultant, Sustainable Development, Milan, Italy

Inshah Malik, Assistant Professor, Kardan University, Kabul, Afghanistan

Deepti Misri, Associate Professor, University of Colorado, Boulder, USA

Preetika Nanda, Research Scholar, India

Immad Nazir, Research Scholar, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany

Goldie Osuri, Associate Professor, University of Warwick, UK

Idrisa Pandit, Independent Scholar, Waterloo, Canada

Samina Raja, Professor, University of Buffalo, USA

Torrun Arnsten Sajjad, Department of Community Medicine and Global Health, University of Oslo, Norway

Mehroosh Tak-, Lecturer, Royal Veterinary College, London, UK

Nishita Trisal, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA

Saiba Varma, Assistant Professor, University of California, San Diego, USA

Haris Zargar, Ph.D. Candidate, International Institute of Social Sciences, The Hague, Netherlands

Ather Zia, Assistant Professor, University of Northern Colorado, USA

Kashmir Scholars Consultative and Advocacy Network (KSCAN) is an interdisciplinary group of scholars of various nationalities engaged in research on the region of Kashmir. Our research on the Kashmir conflict addresses its history, its consequences for the region and beyond, and its possible resolution. KSCAN examines the implications for an internationally mediated political solution and is of relevance to policy makers. Based on our long and active engagement with civil society groups in Indian-controlled Kashmir, we have undertaken to document and communicate the situation on the ground since the Indian state's violence against civilians has continued to mount from July 7th, 2016 onwards. Each of us has written about Kashmiri history, society and politics; and we are particularly concerned about the present conditions of violence.

Contact: Kashmirscholarsnetwork@protonmail.com

Website: www.kashmirscholarsnetwork.org