



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN **Geneva**

National statement, delivered by Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan Permanent Representative to the UN, during Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Peaceful Assembly and Association at the 44th session of the Human Rights Council

(10 July 2020)

Madam President,

Pakistan supports the Rapporteur's call for a renewed global agenda for protection and promotion of the rights to peaceful assembly and association.

His advocacy for addressing root causes of curbs on these fundamental freedoms is timely.

Modern history attests that one such structural impediment to exercising the right to peaceful assembly results from protracted situations of illegal foreign occupation and alien domination.

It has been well-documented by the UN human rights machinery, civil society and global media that occupying powers have invariably suppressed peaceful assembly and association of people, fighting for their inalienable right to self-determination.

The grave Indian attacks on civil liberties of people of the Occupied Jammu & Kashmir since last August represents one such disturbing instance.

India has exploited the COVID pandemic to deprive the Kashmiris of their rights to peaceful assembly under draconian laws (like AFSPA, PSA and UAPA) and by imposing blanket bans on public gatherings.

The civic space in the occupied territory has become non-existent due to either continued illegal imprisonment of political and human rights activists or their release on the condition of maintaining silence.

Under the authoritarian administration of the so-called Lt. Governor, propped up by nearly one million troops and arbitrary internet shutdown, there is no avenue for Kashmiris to express their opinions, and organize and exercise their rights to peaceful assembly and association.

To add insult to injury, India is using excessive force, and inflicting torture to stifle legitimate dissent of the Kashmiris. Armed with high caliber weapons, Indian forces are summarily executing civilians and peaceful protestors as a matter of routine, and destroying their homes and properties as a form of collective punishment with complete impunity.



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The dire situation in IOJ&K is a clarion call for curing the disease of foreign occupation and oppression, instead of treating the symptoms.

We, therefore, urge the Rapporteur to sharpen focus, within his mandate, on the crisis situation in IOJ&K; and outline measures that guarantee upholding the Kashmiri people's basic rights to peaceful assembly and association as a vehicle towards realization of their inalienable right to self-determination.

I thank you.