

JAMMU AND KASHMIR'S NEW MEDIA POLICY

In a 53 page document, the Jammu and Kashmir administration seeks to create the "sustained narrative on the functioning of the government in media."

THE POLICY WILL:

- Empower the occupying authorities to take legal action against media organisations and journalists publishing what they deem to be 'anti-nationalist' and 'fake news' content.
- Since there is no outlined definition of what is 'unethical' or 'anti-nationalist', the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) will assess any media output at their discretion.
- Propose background checks for journalists, editors and publications
- Uses an established system of "empanelment" (eligible for government ads) to ensure that news outlets meet government standards and specifications, including electronic media and audio-visual
- Outlines a joint effort between the DIPR and local security agencies for enforcement. civilians
- Enhanced road blockades and physical restrictions

IMPLICATIONS:

- Only DIPR-approved journalists will pass the background checks, furthering "state-sponsored" journalists
- Exacerbate pre-existing media censorship and violence against journalists
- Involvement of security agencies will create fear and self-censorship amongst Kashmir's journalistic fraternity
- News outlets that do not adhere to the new policy will be "de-empanelled", and not receive government ads, which most local press relies on
- Further disenfranchises Kashmiris by policing their rights to free speech and press



Illustration: Irfan Hanief

As India embarks on its settler-colonial project, it seeks to completely strip Kashmiris of the right to information and expression.