

MAY 2023

MILITARIZATION, SURVEILLANCE, AND SILENCING:

THE 75TH YEAR OF
INDIAN OCCUPATION
IN **KASHMIR**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this report, StandwithKashmir (SWK) documents and highlights the recent strategies employed by the Indian government to advance its settler-colonial project in Indian-occupied Kashmir. The **report has broadly been divided into five sections**. Each section addresses a different front of the war India is waging on Kashmir and Kashmiris.

According to the 2022 annual report of Legal Forum Kashmir (LFK), 2022 saw the Indian occupational forces conduct **199 Cordon and Search Operations (CASOs) along with 166 encounters**. During these activities, 212 civilian properties were subjected to either destruction or vandalism. The **human toll of these operations was 226**, consisting of 181 rebel fighters and 45 extra-judicial civilian killings.

Each section of the report documents a different strategy the Indian government uses to ensure the success of its settler-colonial project in Kashmir. Since the abrogation of Kashmir's special status in 2019, the Indian government has taken a more brutal approach to quashing the resistance of the Kashmiri people against its illegitimate rule, while also advancing a program of demographic change and resource extraction.

Section I details the widespread crackdown on Kashmiri lives including:

- 'Anti-encroachment drive' to grab land and evict Kashmiris from their homes,
- Incarceration of human rights defenders and pro-freedom leadership,
- Harassment, illegal imprisonment, and criminal intimidation of journalists, no-fly lists,
- Firing, intimidation, and arrests of academics,
- Stifling the religious freedom of Kashmiri Muslims and,
- Profiling and attacks on Kashmiris who study or work in India.

Section II details India's increased global network built to help facilitate Kashmir's occupation including:

- Israel's increased support to India in funding, arms trade, and surveillance including face recognition technology and security drones to help terrorize Kashmiri civilians,
- Investments from United Arab Emirates to develop settler-colonial infrastructure on ground while promoting India's narrative of "progress" in Kashmir and,
- Social media tactics such as shadow banning, geo-blocking, and suspending pro-freedom accounts, and forcing companies within India and Indian-occupied Kashmir to share user information with the Indian government in order to detain them.



Section III examines the Indian government's 'normalization' policies including:

- The use of Indian travel influencers to promote tourism using signs saying 'Kashmir is Safe' or 'Kashmir is Normal',
- Organizing Indian-state sponsored music, art, literature and cultural festivals in collaboration with local artists, whose participation is exploited to show acceptance of India by Kashmiris and,
- 'Militarized Humanitarianism' in form of army-sponsored sports and charity events.

Section IV explains the economic and ecological ramifications post-2019 including:

- The Indian government's strategy of limiting Kashmiri trade to Indian markets, incentivizing decrease in local rice cultivation, choking Kashmir's fruit industry by stranding fruit exports or importing competition,
- During the world's longest communication blockade of Kashmir by India, the government auctioned mineral extraction contracts online; allowing Indians to win 90% of them,
- Rising deforestation was caused by India's "development" as thousands of trees were cut to make roads for the transit of Indian army vehicles and more settler infrastructure and,
- The near-extinction of the indigenous Kashmiri deer Hangul which shrunk drastically due to rampant poaching done by outsiders to the region.

Section V documents the aggressive approach taken by India to put technology in service of its occupation in Kashmir such as:

- Use of high-security drones for surveillance and the deployment of Israeli-style 'Facial Recognition Technology',
- 'Twitter Ops' used by India to cultivate an online discourse of 'India-loving Kashmiris' (this has been debunked by the Stanford Internet Observatory)

The report concludes with SWK calling on all anti-colonial and anti-occupation allies to **share this report and generate conversation around the war that India is waging on Kashmir and Kashmiris.**

India gains its strength to operate with complete impunity in Kashmir because of international silence; it is our responsibility to speak out for the people of Kashmir in their long quest for liberation from Indian colonial rule.



NON OCCUPATIONAL D O R T N

In October 1947, India occupied Kashmir under the garb of a botched instrument of accession. India claims that the Hindu Maharaja, who was responsible for the genocide of Muslims in the region of Jammu, surrendered the Muslim-majority princely state of Jammu and Kashmir to India's control. As a result of the first war between India and Pakistan, the United Nations called for a plebiscite to be held so that Kashmiris could determine their own destiny. For 75 years, India has continued to deprive the people of their basic right to self-determination. Thus, the Kashmiri resistance to the occupation is also 75 years old.

Since the armed rebellion that began in the late 1980s against Indian colonial rule, India has ramped up its occupational tactics. Not only did the presence of Indian forces in Kashmir grow exponentially, making it the world's most militarized area, but so too did their human rights violations and war crimes. Close to **100,000 Kashmiris have died at the hands of the Indian occupational forces** in the last three and a half decades, and around 10,000 have been subjected to enforced disappearances. At the same time, rape and sexual violence have been used as a weapon of war. War crimes in the shape of barbaric and unthinkable forms of torture have also been rampant. Indian forces are protected by laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which give them complete impunity.

In August 2019, the government of India abrogated Articles 35A and 370 of the Indian constitution, which was intended to give the region a semi-autonomous status. While India never adhered to its promises of autonomy, Kashmiris had been able to protect the demography of the state by restricting residency rights, like the right to buy land or obtain government employment, to Kashmiri permanent residents.

In the days of the abrogation, India placed Kashmiris under the modern world's longest communication blockade (including the internet and all phone services). It then advanced its project of settler-colonialism as it took over the power of law-making in all spheres related to Kashmir. Since then, the settler-colonial project has been fully operationalized. First, Indians were granted the right to purchase land in Kashmir. Permanent residency status in Kashmir was opened to Indians, and certificates to applicants were directed to be issued within a week. One group that benefits from these rights consists of former army personnel who were deputed to Kashmir and their families, who have been given 'Sainik colonies' (army colonies) in which they can reside. This was further followed by the leasing of huge chunks of land to Indian and foreign businesses.



Business contracts, including for mineral extraction, went to Indian businesses at the expense of local Kashmiri businesses. Indian businesses can now operate in Kashmir without having to obey any environmental regulations. These developments have disastrous implications for Kashmir's fragile ecology.

"Normalization" of the occupation of Kashmir has also been a key tactic of India in these years via the promotion of Kashmir as a tourist destination and the propagation of the social media propaganda hashtag #KashmirIsSafe on a huge scale. In addition, the Hindu nationalist party in power in India and the popular mandate it has received continues to suppress Kashmir's Muslim identity by forcing the Hinduization of the region's culture, politics, history, identity, and demography. This is done by the imposition of Hindu and Indian culture on Kashmiris by changing, for example, the name of the state water works department from Public Health Engineering, which translates as Mehqam e Aab Pashi" in Kashmiri and Urdu, to "Jal Shakti Kendra", in Hindi. The promotion of Hindi is further supplemented with the popularization of Hindu-centric narratives of Kashmir's origins. These false narratives help the Indian state "otherize" the Muslims of Kashmir as foreigners and not indigenous to Kashmir and subtly suggest they are deserving of extermination.

In the long list of legal changes that India has been rapidly orchestrating in Kashmir, the process of "Delimitation" stands out as India pushes to establish Hindu supremacy in the region. Even though the electoral process led by India is a farce and was one of the main triggers for armed resistance in the region, delimitation marks the formal beginning of India's orchestration of demographic change in Kashmir through "constitutional" means. In this process, the Hindu-majority Jammu division's share of assembly seats was increased by six, while that of Kashmir was increased only by one. The government's intentions for these seat changes become clearer when one considers the significant difference between the populations of the Jammu and Kashmir divisions. The latter is home to about 6.8 million people and the former about 5.3 million. This strategic increase in legislative power of the Jammu division aspires to put Kashmir under the control of a Hindu Chief Minister and, once again, subject the Muslims of the region to supreme Hindu rule in an under-construction Hindu Rashtra or Hindu Nation.

With its settler-colonial project, India wants Kashmir to be settled by Indian Hindus, to change the demographics of the region from a Muslim-majority to a Hindu majority, and thus erase all calls for self-determination.



SECTION I

CRACKDOWN ON KASHMIRI LIVES

India's crackdown on Kashmiris has always been in force to ensure that a counter-narrative does not catch up to the one India is building in Kashmir. However, in recent times, this crackdown has taken a more brutal turn.

- India's 'Anti encroachment drive' to dislodge the civilian populations from properties that they have occupied for generations.
- Kashmiri human rights defenders and pro-freedom leadership have been incarcerated under false charges.
- Journalists in Kashmir have been victims of targeted witch hunts. Those who refuse to spread propaganda for the Indian government either end up behind bars or are silenced by cruel criminal intimidation.
- 'No-Fly' and 'No-Entry' list of Kashmiris.
- Academic censorship has also taken a turn for the worse, with scholars being jailed for newspaper articles they wrote more than a decade ago and restrictions on what students can research (making sure they do not propose research on the Kashmir dispute/conflict).
- Denial of religious freedom and enforcement of Hindu supremacy in Kashmir.

The crackdown on Kashmiri civil society, journalism and academia plays an important role in India's settler-colonial project in Kashmir. As **India strives to create the spectacle of "normalcy" in Kashmir using tourism, "development," and investment** as its main strategy, silencing of these spaces ensures no one will contradict this narrative.

a) India is grabbing land in Kashmir and evicting people from their homes

"The Great Land-Grab" of Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir has begun — confirming the worst fears of its local communities: the Indian state is planning to take large tracts of their land, and give it to Indian settlers and businesses. Given the difficulties in obtaining full information about the evictions of people from their homes (the Indian government is increasingly silencing the local media and videos were not allowed during the evictions) we do not yet have the complete figures of how many people and how much property was impacted. However, videos that showed up on social media (and many were later taken down) show Indian bulldozers



Eviction Drive Site
Photo: Scroll (PTI)

demolishing property and locals protesting these crimes — all in the dead of winter.



Since the beginning of this year, the occupying state has implemented what it calls and 'Anti encroachment drive' to dislodge the civilian populations from agricultural and non-agricultural properties that they have occupied for generations. According to a report by Kashmiri advocacy organization, Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFK), land measuring 178005.213 acres in the Kashmir region — and 25,159.56 acres in Jammu — has been earmarked for land grabs by the Indian state. This move will ultimately lead to the **economic disempowerment and geographical displacement of the local population.**

The abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 — which revoked the region's semi-autonomous status — paved the way for the recent surge in land grabbing by the Indian state. Following the abrogation, India has passed laws that violate the human rights of indigenous Kashmiris. One such measure was the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act in 2019, which repealed more than 200 laws that had previously safeguarded the land and residency rights of indigenous Kashmiris. Kashmiris had been granted these lands in previous decades through various forms of legislation and land reform; with Kashmir's special status removed, the Indian government now says that these laws are not relevant anymore, and thus, people's legal claims to these lands and properties is void.

Legal Forum for Kashmir describes the situation very succinctly: "The enactment of Jammu & Kashmir Re-organization Act 2019 by the Indian Parliament after the unilateral and Illegal annexation of Indian occupied Jammu Kashmir-IOJK marks a critical turning point in the **transition of colonial laws into settler colonial legislations** applicable to state."

The Indian government has been laying the foundations of a massive settler-colonialist project for the past few years. First, it began to change or revoke laws in order to provide a legal mandate for its injustices against the local population. Then, it used its local henchmen to collect information about every inch of land in Kashmir, especially land that aligns with its settlement ambitions. Thousands of pages of charts have been created, with each and every district in Kashmir included, as well as the total area of the land and its current inhabitants. Kashmiris who have already been evicted were not even given a chance to show their documents — they had **no means of redress.**



Eviction Drive Site
Photo: Scroll (PTI)



This means that the Indian government has the complete freedom to act upon their colonialist project with impunity. These laws **enable the government to seize land** for various projects, such as the construction of military installations, settler colonies, highways, railways, and industrial corridors, without the consent of the indigenous inhabitants of the land — resulting in the **forced displacement of thousands of peoples**. The result has been devastating, leaving people without adequate housing or access to basic services. This is not to mention the deprivation of Kashmiris of their livelihood.

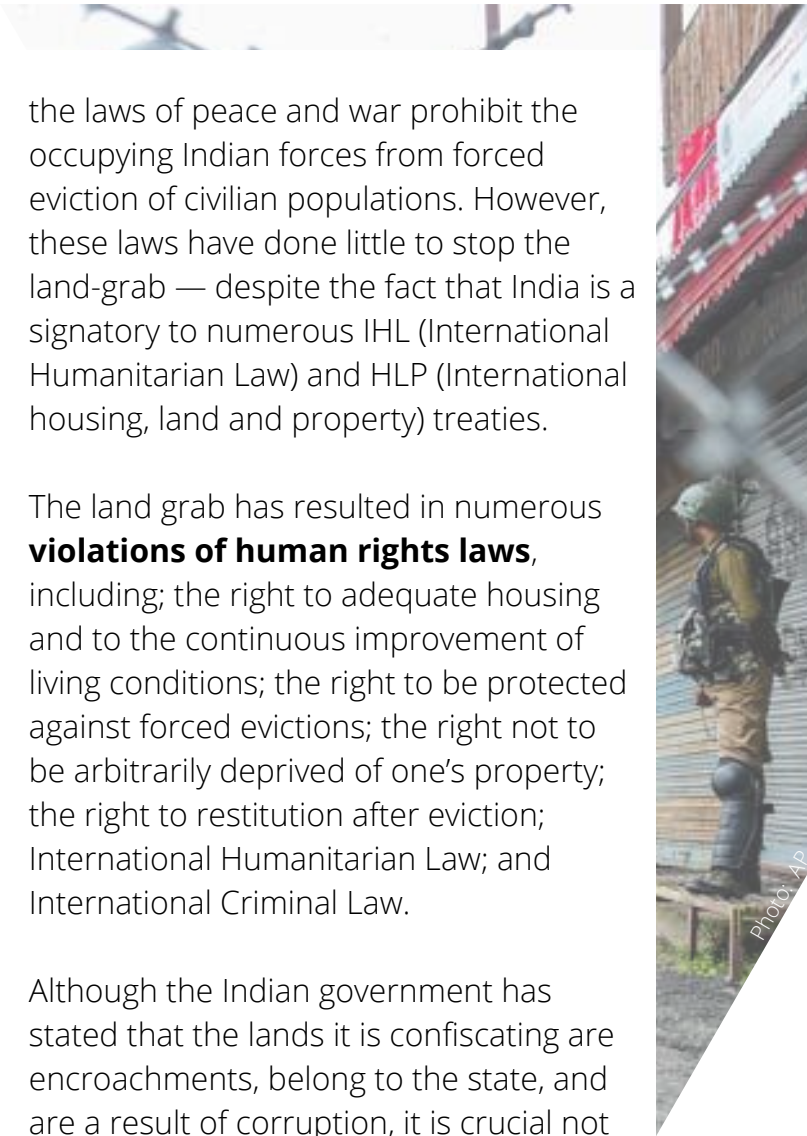
Forced evictions are widely considered to be the most severe violation under human rights law. The practice involves, “the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/ or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection.” Although the causes of forced evictions are diverse, all stages of the forced eviction process involve human rights implications. While the right to adequate housing is perhaps the clearest human right violated, a large number of other rights are also breached by this practice.

In the past, the Indian occupying force has completely ignored the human rights of Kashmiris, to devastating effect. This has not changed. As the LFK report details,

the laws of peace and war prohibit the occupying Indian forces from forced eviction of civilian populations. However, these laws have done little to stop the land-grab — despite the fact that India is a signatory to numerous IHL (International Humanitarian Law) and HLP (International housing, land and property) treaties.

The land grab has resulted in numerous **violations of human rights laws**, including; the right to adequate housing and to the continuous improvement of living conditions; the right to be protected against forced evictions; the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of one’s property; the right to restitution after eviction; International Humanitarian Law; and International Criminal Law.

Although the Indian government has stated that the lands it is confiscating are encroachments, belong to the state, and are a result of corruption, it is crucial not to delink the anti-encroachment drive from **India’s broader settler-colonial ambitions in Kashmir**. India is well on its way to changing the demographics of the region from a Muslim-majority to a Hindu majority one — to finally silence all calls for self-determination.



b) Human Rights Defenders of Kashmir – Hunted and Jailed

For decades, rights groups in Indian-occupied Kashmir have been working to document abuses and fighting to uphold human rights in the region. Their work has revealed the human cost of the war India is waging against Kashmir, and they have actively been seeking accountability from international bodies such as the United Nations. Organizations like the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) and the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) have done such commendable work that the heads of both organizations received the Rafto Memorial Prize in 2017. Parveena Ahangar, the head of APDP, was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.

However, since 2019, India has been carrying out widespread crackdowns on these rights groups, especially JKCCS and APDP and their human rights defenders. Here, we must bear in mind that since India ramped up its military presence in Kashmir in retaliation to the armed and popular rebellion that started in the 1980s, the excessive use of force has led to the use of torture, disappearances, and extra-judicial executions. Rights groups have been consistently documenting these atrocities and filing legal cases on behalf of the victims and their families.

In October 2021, the **offices of both JKCCS and APDP were raided** by India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) under

the pretense of checking their funding sources.

However, Parvez Imroz, the head of JKCCS, and APDP's Parveena Ahangar described the raids as intimidation tactics to silence these rights groups. It is notable that a year before these raids, in its first-ever report, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) quoted the work of both JKCCS and APDP extensively. This was followed by a UN report in 2019 that called for an investigation into the matters of human rights violations in Kashmir by India. Immediately after the release of these reports, the raids started to either force these groups into silence or make them submit to become mouthpieces of the Indian regime.

“After the reports, they [the authorities] started intimidating us. We are under pressure. They [the Indian government] want complete silence from us. By silencing rights defenders, the security forces have become more emboldened.”

*A JKCCS Volunteer
(Source: Al Jazeera)*



The abrogation of Kashmir's autonomy was followed by a **revocation of about 100 laws**, one of which provided for a State Human Rights Commission in Kashmir.

In addition, India uses its draconian UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act) to detain and incarcerate dissidents and often charges them with terror-related offenses. **India has jailed around 2300 people in Kashmir and booked them under this draconian law.** Anyone charged under UAPA can be jailed for up to six months without any kind of trial. Thereafter, the courts must follow the guideline "jail is the rule, and bail is the exception". This stricture causes accused persons to languish in jail for years on end, without the charges against them proven. The burden of proof is placed on the accused, who is deemed "guilty until proven innocent."

Recently, an internationally renowned and UN-recognized human rights defender from Kashmir, Khurram Parvez, completed a year in jail. Even though calls for his release have come from all over the world and from the United Nations, India continues to incarcerate him under the draconian UAPA. Khurram is the Program Coordinator of the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society and Chairman of the Board of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) and is among the most articulate defender of human rights in Kashmir. In addition to being jailed by Indian authorities for his activism, Khurram has also been

subjected to persistent harassment and deadly attacks by the Indian state. The crackdowns on human rights defenders and independent media and journalists in Kashmir present a very scary picture. As India radically advances its settler-colonial project in Kashmir, the silencing of human rights defenders and the media will effectively allow it to prevent even basic documentation of what is happening with brute force.



Kashmiri HR Defender Khurram Parvez
Photo: Facebook (Khurram Parvez)



c) House Arrests and Denial of Medical Care – How India is Dealing with Pro-Freedom Leadership in Kashmir

When India unilaterally abrogated the semi-autonomous status of Kashmir in 2019, it ended up making over **5000 arrests across the region**. It also imprisoned the Kashmiri politicians who had been managing Indian politics in Kashmir for 70 years. These included former Chief Ministers, Parliament Members, Legislative Assembly Members, and Cabinet Ministers. However, as these people have been gradually released, the incarceration of pro-freedom leaders continues: the religious head of Kashmiri Muslims, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has been under continuous house arrest since then.

Alongside these house arrests, since 2019 India has also incarcerated several other leaders. **Yasin Malik**, the founder and head of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, was convicted in a terror-funding case by an Indian court and sentenced to life imprisonment. Malik, speaking in open court, refused to defend the charges leveled against him as he declared, “Terrorism-related charges leveled against me are concocted, fabricated, and politically motivated. If seeking Azadi (freedom) is a crime, then I am ready to accept this crime and its consequences.” This statement, while not a ‘confession’ in any manner, was later reported by the Indian media as a confession to the charges leveled against him.

At different times, Malik has spent around 15 years in Indian jails. More often than not,

while his health has deteriorated there, he has been hospitalized only when he is in ‘critical condition’.

The **denial of medical care** has been another tactic used by the Indian government against Kashmiri political prisoners. In November 2022, jailed Hurriyat leader Mohammad Altaf Shah passed away in an Indian jail. Shah, who had been battling cancer, was continuously denied bail and critical medical care. Even after his family went to court and obtained an order for him to be shifted to specialty care, they were not allowed to move him. In several tweets, his daughter, Kashmiri journalist Ruwa Shah, pleaded with the Indian government, including the Prime Minister and Home Minister. By the time his transfer was allowed, it was too late, and he passed away soon afterward.



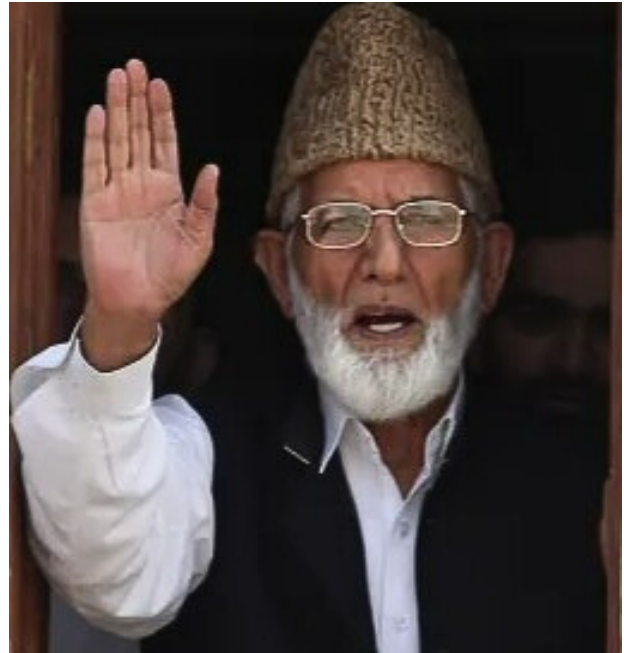
Kashmiri Pro-Freedom Leader, Yasin Malik
Photo: Arvind Yadav/Hindustan Times/Sipa USA



Photo: AP

Along with those jailed like Malik and Shah, several Kashmiri leaders have also been denied medical care while under house arrest. These included the octogenarian Kashmiri leader **Syed Ali Shah Geelani**, whose body the Indian government stole from his family at night to bury it. The Indian state ramped up security immensely so that his death would not garner any funeral processions. Mohammad Ashraf Sehrai, who replaced Geelani, also passed away in the custody of the Indian regime, with his family alleging medical negligence and denial of medical care. Before Sehrai, Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, a member of Jamaat-i-Islami who was jailed in the aftermath of the abrogation, also passed away in a jail in Uttar Pradesh, 16,000 kilometers away from his home.

The stifling of pro-freedom leadership has been ratcheted up to a new level by India since August 2019. A massive number of religious and political leaders have been placed behind bars and denying them medical care has been used as a weapon.



Kashmiri Pro-Freedom Leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani
Photo: Altaf Qadri/AP

This is a clear violation of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the recommendations of the UN's Human Rights Committee. However, along with other human rights, India has been violating these as well.



d) Bootlicking, Silence, or Jail: The Only Options Given to Journalists in Kashmir

Kashmiri journalists who refuse to spread pro-India propaganda have always been subjected to targeted witch hunts, and more so recently. Several high-profile Kashmiri journalists remain incarcerated in Indian prisons for their work.

In late 2022, a blog by the name of **Kashmir Fights** issued a list of journalists who are working hand-in-glove with the Indian settler regime in Kashmir. The

source of this blog remains unverified. However, it seems to have given the Indian government justification to launch a targeted operation directed at either incarcerating or scaring journalists into silence. This crackdown has taken a new and more aggressive turn via raids conducted on the houses of journalists who do not toe the settler-colonial state's line.





Kashmir Press Club, Srinagar
Photo: Kamran Yousuf

The Club was a distinct institution protecting journalist rights in the region, where attacks on the media and intimidation of journalists by the authorities are reaching unprecedented levels. Stopping people from having a space like the KPC was simply to bring an end to any solidarity that emerges in difficult times for journalists in Kashmir,"

*Aakash Hassan, Freelance Kashmiri journalist
NewsClick Article, Jan 2022*

Many journalists are repeatedly called into local police and intelligence offices, where they are **questioned and harassed**. Their equipment (such as laptops and phones) and important documentation and books have been taken from their homes. This breach of privacy also risks the safety and privacy of those who have contacted the journalists or served as their sources.

Several prominent Kashmiri journalists have been impacted by these raids, and one has been arrested (although he was later released on bail). The 'questioning'

that reportedly lasted for at least six days in a row took place at the Shergarhi police station in Srinagar, which is tens of miles away from the residences of most of these journalists. While the commute in itself amounts to harassment, the state maintained that these journalists were questioned for their 'professional associations'. Almost all the harassed journalists have a reputation for speaking truth to power and were on the opposite side of the Kashmir Press Club coup orchestrated by the Indian regime in early 2022.

Attacking those Kashmir journalists who refuse to serve as propaganda for the Indian government is yet another tactic of India's settler-colonial control as it seeks to completely suppress the voices of conscience.



Aasif Sultan, a Kashmiri journalist, arrested in 2018 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act or UAPA.
Photo: Getty Images.



e) 'No-Fly' and 'No-Entry' list of Kashmiris

On October 19, 2022, Kashmir's Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Sanna Irshad Mattoo, was barred from flying out of India at the Delhi International Airport. Mattoo was heading to the United States for the Pulitzer ceremony to receive her award. She was not allowed to fly out even though she held a valid passport, visa, and ticket. No official explanation was given as to why she was prevented from boarding her flight. However, Mattoo is not alone. Since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, the "No Fly" list in Kashmir has been growing exponentially.

"This was a once-in-a-lifetime moment for me to go [to receive] the Pulitzer Prize. But I was stopped without any reason. I am very heartbroken and disappointed"

*Sanna Mattoo, Kashmiri Journalist
Al Jazeera, Oct 2022*

Only a month before this incident, Aakash Hassan, a freelance journalist from Kashmir, was detained at the Delhi airport. He was held for several hours and subjected to questions about his family, his professional background, and the reasons for his travel. Subsequently, he was barred from traveling and listed on the "lookout circular", which is used to deter those accused of crimes from traveling out of India.

Hassan told CJP (Committee to Protect Journalists) in a phone interview that he was unaware of any case against him, and that

he officials had refused to say which law enforcement agency had issued the listing. "Even those that are out of jail are left in fear," said Hassan, who was going to Sri Lanka on assignment for The Guardian newspaper.



Aakash Hassan, Freelance Kashmiri journalist
Photo: Aakash Hassan

Amnesty International reported that the "No Fly" list of Kashmiris contains around 450 names, but it is safe to say that this number has grown significantly given India's **rampant crackdown on dissenting voices in Kashmir**. These 450 people include Kashmiri businessmen, lawyers, human rights activists, students, academics, pro-freedom leaders, and journalists.

CJP spoke to seven Kashmiri journalists who believed these bans are a way of letting India **construct a narrative of "Normalcy"** around Kashmir by hindering anyone from reporting or writing the truth. The existence of these lists forces people to self-censor. Those who are on them are deprived of



Photo: AP

personal and professional opportunities.

In addition to the “No Fly” lists, “No Entry” lists are also compiled by India vis-à-vis Kashmir. In November 2019, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) issued a statement calling on India to ‘remove the no entry/exit’ list in Kashmir.

“The Indian government has generated an exit list and a potential no-entry list that make it difficult for researchers to travel to and from India and Kashmir for work and personal visits. In addition to politicians and activists, scholars whose work focuses on Kashmir and/or are Kashmiris, are finding their freedom of expression severely curtailed and obstructed”

The American Anthropological Association (AAA), November 2019

The AAA went on to comment on India’s image as the ‘largest democracy’ in the world and said that “India’s self-image as the world’s largest democracy does not square with preemptively **arresting up to 2,000 Kashmiris, including academic scholars**; suspending mobile-telephone networks and the internet for weeks; and arresting doctors for bringing attention to medicine shortages in the valley. On behalf of our nearly 10,000 members, the AAA calls on the Indian government to remove this communications clampdown and restore the free exchange of scholarship and ideas vital to a functioning democracy.”



f) Crippling Censorship & Crackdowns on Education & Academia

Since August 2019, India has intensified its attacks against all facets of Kashmiri civil society: human rights defenders and organizations, journalists, lawyers, and activists. More recently, the Indian government has escalated its crackdown on Kashmiri academics and researchers to completely stifle all forms of independent inquiry and documentation. Those who have been targeted are primarily involved in critical research on Kashmir and India’s long-term colonization of the region. In addition, the Indian government is also trying to directly **control academic research in the Social Sciences** that deals with any topics related to occupied Kashmir.

The new Jammu Kashmir Public University Bill 2022 makes it the duty of the Jammu Kashmir Public Service Commission to conduct eligibility tests for lecturers and professors of any



Student searched by Indian forces in Srinagar
Photo: Scroll (PTI)



subject, as may be prescribed. This specific provision means that the scoring for Ph.Ds. and other research, which formed a major chunk of the previous assessment, have now been reduced to a meager 10/100. This is a **direct attack on students** who take up research and renders the pursuit of a Ph.D. a waste of time vis-a-vis employability in Kashmir. At the same time, the bill aims to establish new cluster universities across Kashmir with the Lieutenant Governor installed by India acting as the Chancellor of these institutions. This will ensure the **omnipresence of the Indian state in Kashmir's academia.**

Here are some of the different ways India has attempted to stifle academic freedom in Kashmir:

01

Dismissal of government employees, especially in the Department of Education

This targeted manhunt started with the Indian government operating through its Governor in Kashmir and introducing a new law where it could **dismiss any Kashmiri government employee over the age of 48 years**. In March 2021, the Governor also issued a circular mapping the Do's and Don'ts of social media for government employees. In 2018, a doctor from the Jammu region was **dismissed because of a Facebook post**.

Laws and actions like these have enormous consequences for the local population, considering that the private sector is minimal in the region and the government and bureaucracy are the major sources of salaried employment. This new law has been especially used against government employees who tacitly support, or have any links to, the freedom movement. While these dismissals, almost three dozen by now, have taken place across all government departments, the **Education department has borne the major brunt**. Several schoolteachers and professors from the University of Kashmir were dismissed or suspended either for "alleged militant links" or "religious affiliations".

Some recent names to be dismissed are noted legal scholar, columnist, and Principal of the Kashmir Law College, Dr. Sheikh Showkat; and Dr. Muheet Ahmad Bhat, Scientist-D in the Post-Graduate Department of Computer Science and Dr. Syed Majid Qadri, Senior Assistant Professor in the Department of Management Studies, both at the University of Kashmir. At the same time, organizations like the Kashmir University Teachers Association have also been put **under the scanner for "anti-national activities" and accused of being "terrorist-secessionist" networks**.

A direct quote from an official document that targets Kashmiri academics reads: "As regards the teaching staff, only 3 have been found to be contaminated to an extent that requires immediate attention. There are 12



others who have been assessed to be contaminated to a lesser degree, requiring a different type of graded response. There is a third category of 24 others who may need counseling and observation only."

02

Arrests of Academics

The Indian government has proactively sought to censor all kinds of critical research coming out of Kashmir, and students have been their prime targets. A scholar from the Pharmacy department at the University of Kashmir was recently arrested for an article he had written in a local daily. The piece, entitled "The Shackles of Slavery Will Break", was deemed **sedition 10 years after its publication**.

03

Monitoring and surveilling all academics, events, and research

The Indian Ministry for External Affairs recently issued an order whereby government approval was made mandatory for any online events on India's "internal matters", including Kashmir. In 2019, India's Central Ministry for Human Resource Development, which controls education in the country, also came up with an order whereby it asked universities and students to pursue PhDs only on topics of "national interest". While this directive seems not to have rung any alarm bells among Indian academics, it has had widespread implications for academics in Kashmir. Universities and departments have been **asked to provide a list of graduate thesis topics to ensure critical themes are not being researched**. Students pursuing research on topics deemed to be critical of the state have been coerced to change their topics or made to withdraw papers due for publication. Faculty have also been requested to submit a copy of their property statements and seek prior approval before traveling abroad for higher studies. Academia in the region, which has always been under-supported and subject to financial duress, now faces a hegemonic state that is forcing them into submission and self-censorship.

04

Harassment and intimidation

Students and academics have been subject to surveillance (both online and offline) and visits to their or their families' homes or offices/places of work. Intelligence officials attempt to ask them for information about their families, properties, employment, travel, research, and publications. Often, multiple visits/phone **calls are made to let academics and students know they are being watched regularly**. Some have had their homes raided and searched. This activity has engendered an atmosphere of extreme fear.



05

Denial of Mobility

As with journalists and human rights defenders, Kashmiri academics and researchers who wish to travel abroad must deal with travel prohibitions and difficulties with passport renewals and approvals. These hurdles deny them opportunities for professional development. Many of them are forced to self-censor to be able to travel in and out of Kashmir.

06

Criminalizing terminology

Recently, the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir, while dealing with a question regarding freedom of speech and expression, said that the use of the phrase “occupation of military” is ‘Unlawful Activity’ and hence, punishable under the draconian UAPA. Notably, the **government can declare anyone to be a “terrorist”** under this law, without judicial trial of any kind. At the same time, journalists and news houses based in Kashmir have also been asked to stop using the term “militant” to refer to armed pro-freedom fighters and instead use the word “terrorist”.

07

Difficulty in Securing Jobs/Professional Advancement

If an academic proposes critical work about Kashmir, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to find a job, fellowship, or further research opportunities in Kashmir or Indian universities. Many supervisors and advisors hesitate to guide those projects due to their fears of being targeted.

08

Harassment and targeting of Kashmiri academics abroad

The attacks against Kashmiri academics are not restricted to Kashmir and India. Academics in the diaspora—across Europe, the Middle East, and North America—are also **targeted, surveilled, and harassed**. This is especially true in locations where there are large populations of Indian nationalists/Hindutva forces, whereby academic events/talks are disrupted and academics are harassed on social media or in their places of work.

“This crackdown has led to exponential growth in self-censorship with a tremendously heightened fear of persecution. The research community in the valley has no escape from this tightening noose and this means that some are either contemplating studies abroad or giving up research completely.”

Kashmiri student pursuing his Ph.D. in Social Sciences



What has all of this resulted in?

When a student was asked whether they and their peers have considered “self-censoring” to avoid persecution in the form of arrests and detention, and if yes, what this has meant, they said, “Absolutely. It entails removal of content already in the public domain, refusal to publish anything critical of the state in the near future, not engaging in critical formal or informal discussions, etc.”

Critical research and scholarship on Kashmir have disrupted India’s nationalist narratives regarding its long-term colonization of the region. Thus, attacks on academia and critical research emerging out of and on Kashmir mean that along with the moves to rapidly change the demography of the region, India has started to **strangle concrete efforts to document, research, and preserve Kashmir’s reality**. India has started to use the term “white-collar terrorists” to refer to all members of Kashmiri civil society to further suppress and criminalize them.

Surveillance of everyday life is reaching an all-time high in the region, and the serious clampdown on academia and anti-India expression online/offline is a part of this process. While India moves to change the demography of Kashmir and force academia into self-censorship, it becomes immensely important to document and highlight this phenomenon as it unfolds. Kashmiri students and academics, along with other members of civil society, have long played an important role in documenting the Indian occupation and Kashmiri resistance, thus changing and directly challenging Indian hegemonic narratives. They must be allowed to continue their work.

g) Kashmiris targeted at Indian Universities

Attacks on Kashmiris in general and Kashmiri students in particular, across India, are not a new phenomenon. However, Muslim institutions like the Jamia Millia Islamia University of Delhi and the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) of Uttar Pradesh have always acted as safehouses for Kashmiris. But attacks on Kashmiri students seem to have taken a drastic turn for the worse in recent times, whether through the framing of such students during the anti-CAA protests of Delhi, where one Kashmiri student was even shot at, or the recent attacks on Kashmiri students at the Aligarh Muslim University. Overall, **violence and bigotry have multiplied**.

The reaction of the Indian government to these attacks has been to profile Kashmiri students studying across India even further. As leaks of data about Kashmiris across India are not rare, Kashmiri students worry that the profiling will lead to more coordinated attacks.



h) Religious 'Freedom' in Kashmir

Although it is currently ruled by a right-wing Hindu nationalist government, India claims to be a “secular democracy.” Its constitution allows for the freedom of religion, meaning people should be able to follow and freely practice their religious beliefs. India’s constitution says the state will not “discriminate, patronize or meddle in the profession of any religion.” However, when it comes to Islam and Muslims, and especially when it comes to colonized Kashmir, the religious freedom and claims of secularism mentioned in the Indian Constitution are completely absent.

Instead, the state is attempting to erase people’s Muslim identity and facilitate Hindu supremacy. This attempt is noted in the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)’s 2022 report, which designates India as a **“Country of Particular Concern”** for “engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom”.

This past year, social media was rife with videos of Kashmiri students being forced to chant Hindu hymns to celebrate the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi’s birth. This happened immediately after popular Muslim clerics across Kashmir were detained and charged with the draconian Public Safety Act.

Here are some other events that expose India’s denial of religious freedom and enforcement of Hindu supremacy in Kashmir:

01

Muharram Processions Banned for Three Decades

Muharram processions have not been allowed in Kashmir since 1989 for “security reasons”, and this year was no different. These processions are critical to the religious practice of Shia Muslims worldwide, who commemorate the death of the Prophet’s grandson and members of his family, and Kashmiris attempt to hold them despite the restrictions. While Muharram this year collided with India’s Independence Day circus in Kashmir, the processions were attacked by Kashmiri Police and CRPF, and mourners were critically injured. This happened in one part of Srinagar while in the other part, organized Indian nationalist “Tiranga Rallies” and “Flag Marches” under a thick blanket of security.

02

Janmashtami Processions Across Srinagar Under Police and CRPF Presence

Shortly after Muharram, Srinagar saw processions led by Hindus to celebrate the birth of Lord Krishna. Amidst loud pomp and show, these Janmashtami processions were provided security and thus organized under the aegis of the state. Kashmiri Pandits are known to be Shivites or followers of Lord Shiva, and Janmashtami celebrations never used to display such grandeur in the past.



03

Desecration of Qur'an by Indian Army

On many occasions, the Indian army has desecrated the Qur'an, Muslims' holiest text. This desecration is an attempt at psychological warfare and is carried out with full knowledge of the consequences. In 2013, as videos of one such incident went viral, Muslims in the region protested and were met with force. Four Kashmiri protestors died as a result.

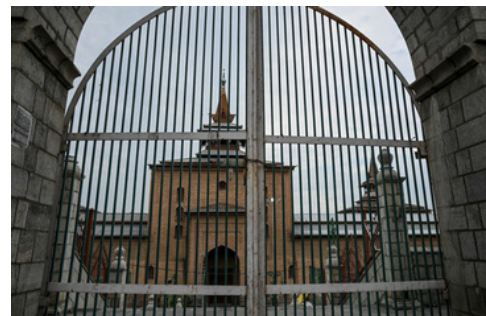
04

Srinagar Jamia Masjid Closed for Friday Prayers for Three Years

The 600-year-old grand mosque of Srinagar has been shut down for Friday prayers for the past three years. The mosque has been revered by Muslims across Kashmir for centuries. On religious occasions like Eid, Shab e Meraj, and Shab e Baraat, hundreds of thousands of devotees flock to the mosque from all over the region. The mosque's head preacher, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has also been held under continuous house arrest and prevented from delivering Friday sermons. In 2022, in a public statement, the Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Kashmir refuted claims about Mirwaiz being under house arrest, but the religious cleric was denied permission to deliver his Friday sermon at the grand mosque a few days later.

In addition, in 2022, another drama unfolded when an Indian lawmaker tweeted to the Lieutenant Governor of Kashmir to question the prolonged closure of the mosque. The LG, refuting 'prolonged closure', claimed that the mosque had only been closed for three Fridays in the current year. However, the mosque's administration clarified (amid the heavy presence of Kashmiri Police and the CRPF) that this year's prayers had been disallowed for 14 Fridays so far.

The closure of this grand mosque is not only a blatant violation of the religious freedom of Kashmiris but has also been a source of emotional trauma for locals. **"Something is missing deep inside my heart,"** said Bashir Ahmed, 65, a retired government employee who has offered prayers at the mosque for more than 50 years.



Srinagar's Grand Mosque locked up for prayers
Photo: Tauseef Mustafa/AFP/Getty Images



SECTION II

WHO'S FACILITATING INDIA'S OCCUPATION IN KASHMIR

In this section, we will talk about who is financing and logistically supporting the Indian occupation in Kashmir. In the aftermath of the abrogation, the Indian government has ramped up efforts to secure foreign funding for its settler-colonial project in Kashmir. This is done through international trade deals and foreign investments in Kashmir, which on one hand enable India to claim ownership and authority over Kashmir, and on the other, ensure that countries that invest in Kashmir stay away from calling out the Indian occupation and its human rights abuses in the region. These human rights abuses and India's military hold on Kashmir are supported by the latest deadly weapons manufactured in countries like the US, Russia, and Israel.

Here is a summary of the financial and logistical supporters of Kashmir's occupation:

a) Foreign Trade Investment in Kashmir

On January 7, 2022, the Lieutenant Governor of the Indian regime in Kashmir announced that India had secured foreign investment worth \$2.5 billion for Kashmir. He remarked that from a "sleeping business destination", India had turned Kashmir into a land of opportunities. These investments, he revealed, were secured under six agreements the Indian government signed at Dubai Expo 2020 and were related to real estate in Kashmir. He added that the partnership between India and the United Arab Emirates would be crucial for his administration to bring more investment into Kashmir. On his 3-day visit to Dubai, the LG also visited the Lulu Hypermarket, where Kashmir's world-famous Saffron is casually sold off as 'Indian', under an Indian GI tag. Sinha said that after having abolished around '890 archaic laws', they had unlocked the key to socio-economic growth in Kashmir.



Dubai Expo 2020
Photo: AFP via Getty Images



Kashmiri apples showcase at LuLu Hypermarket
Photo: Gulf News

Speaking at an event held for 36 delegates from the Gulf who visited Kashmir in March 2020, the LG administration's Principal Secretary of Industries and Commerce said that "When the Prime Minister arrives in April, he will inaugurate projects worth Rs 33,000 crore, which means the land has been already allotted to these projects. This is double the investment that has happened here in the past 75 years." He went on to say, "We cannot attract American and Japanese investment directly. Once GCC members' investors are here, others will follow. Kashmir is misrepresented as a 'conflict zone' and the image of a CRPF personnel with automatic rifles in the backdrop of 'concertina wire' is what Kashmir has been reduced to." These statements reflect that **while India is securing funding for its settler-colonial project in Kashmir, it is also creating global platforms for itself, where it can claim ownership over Kashmir**. At the same time, land, which is the most crucial resource of a people under settler-colonial occupation, is being targeted in Kashmir and sold to foreign corporations and investors.

The Principal Secretary also remarked that "this is for the first time in the history of J&K that we [have] introduced this policy. We have just unlocked the owner's right to change land use, which was important. The whole of Kashmir cannot be just growing 'paddy'. The mention of "paddy" was the key in this statement, as rice is the staple food of people across Kashmir.

India has been trying for decades to make Kashmir dependent on Indian rice. This is done by incentivizing "land use change" and by leasing out cultivable land to big corporations. In the past, there have been debates on popular Indian news channels about how Kashmiris can survive "months of lockdown and shutdowns", and one of the reasons that have been mentioned is the vast cultivation of rice in Kashmir, which has made the people self-sufficient. However, India is now making desperate attempts to **attack this self-sufficiency and create a dependency instead**.

While this report was being drafted, the allocation of rice per person by the Indian government in Kashmir was cut down to only 5Kgs per month, which makes it a reality that the people of Kashmir may have to live from month to month in terms of getting their staple food. Controlling the staple food of Kashmiris allows India to hold a bargaining chip if Kashmiris decide to launch an agitation, as they have in previous years.

Photo: Nissar Ahmad

b) The Dubai Expo – An International Normalization Event

The Dubai Expo held between October 2021 and March 2022 was a massive normalization event where 192 nations were participating to display their achievements, areas for investment, and reinforce their national identity. This world expo was crucial for India's continued settler-colonial expansion in Kashmir. For the first time, each nation had its own pavilion to showcase its culture, goods, and accomplishments, and India was one of the nations with the highest levels of participation.

The Indian pavilion featured various regions and their investment opportunities, and the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) region was exhibited from January 3-13. India is the second-largest trading partner of the UAE, and the UAE is India's third, so it comes as no surprise that the Indian government is pushing for large investments in Kashmir from the Gulf nation. India continues its settler-colonial expansion of Kashmir by marketing Kashmir as a part of the Indian nation and bringing in massive investments, dispossessing Kashmiris through its broader **project of demographic change and erasure of Kashmiri identity**.

At the expo, deals in J&K were made with Lulu Group, Al Maya Group, MATU Investments LLC, GL Employment Brokerage LLC, Century Financial, Noon E-Commerce, and Grandeur Business Solutions. Letters of intent with Magna Waves Pvt Ltd and Emaar Group were also

signed. These companies represent industries including healthcare, tourism, real estate, retail, and more, many with a massive global reach. Century Financial invested \$100 million to build three hotels and one commercial-residential complex, and Emaar Group, a multinational real estate company with property throughout South/Southwest Asia and in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, is planning on building a 500,000 sq. ft. mall in Srinagar. These developments will boost the economies of India, Dubai/the UAE, as well as the massive companies making investments by **stealing Kashmiri land, displacing entire communities, exploiting Kashmiri labor, or bringing in Indian labor as a form of settlement**.

The Dubai Expo reifies structures of imperial and colonial violence, providing a space where nationalism is strengthened and displayed. India's participation in the Expo allowed it to put forth messaging, goods, and technologies that align with its constructed national identity. Through such actions, Kashmir's culture and land are being severed from Kashmir and Kashmiri identity for the sake of India's nationalism and settler-colonial ambitions.

Photo: Nisar Ahmad

c) Growing Support From Israel

Since 1950, India has imported the largest volume of arms in the world. Spending on arms has escalated since India's right-wing government came to power in 2014. The two countries that send India the most weapons to enable the ongoing occupation of Kashmir are **Israel and the United States**.



Source: SWK

Arms sales from Israel to India began in earnest in 1992 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, a long-time ally and weapons supplier to India. The stream grew following the 1999 Kargil War, during which Israel provided key ammunition to India.

In 2010, an Israeli raid on a Turkish ship belonging to the "Gaza Freedom Flotilla" resulted in the deaths of nine Turkish citizens. In the 2000s, pressure from the American government forced Israel to halt arms contracts with China. These events resulted in Israel becoming diplomatically estranged from its two major customers

(Turkey and China) and forced Israel to focus more on the massive market potential of India.

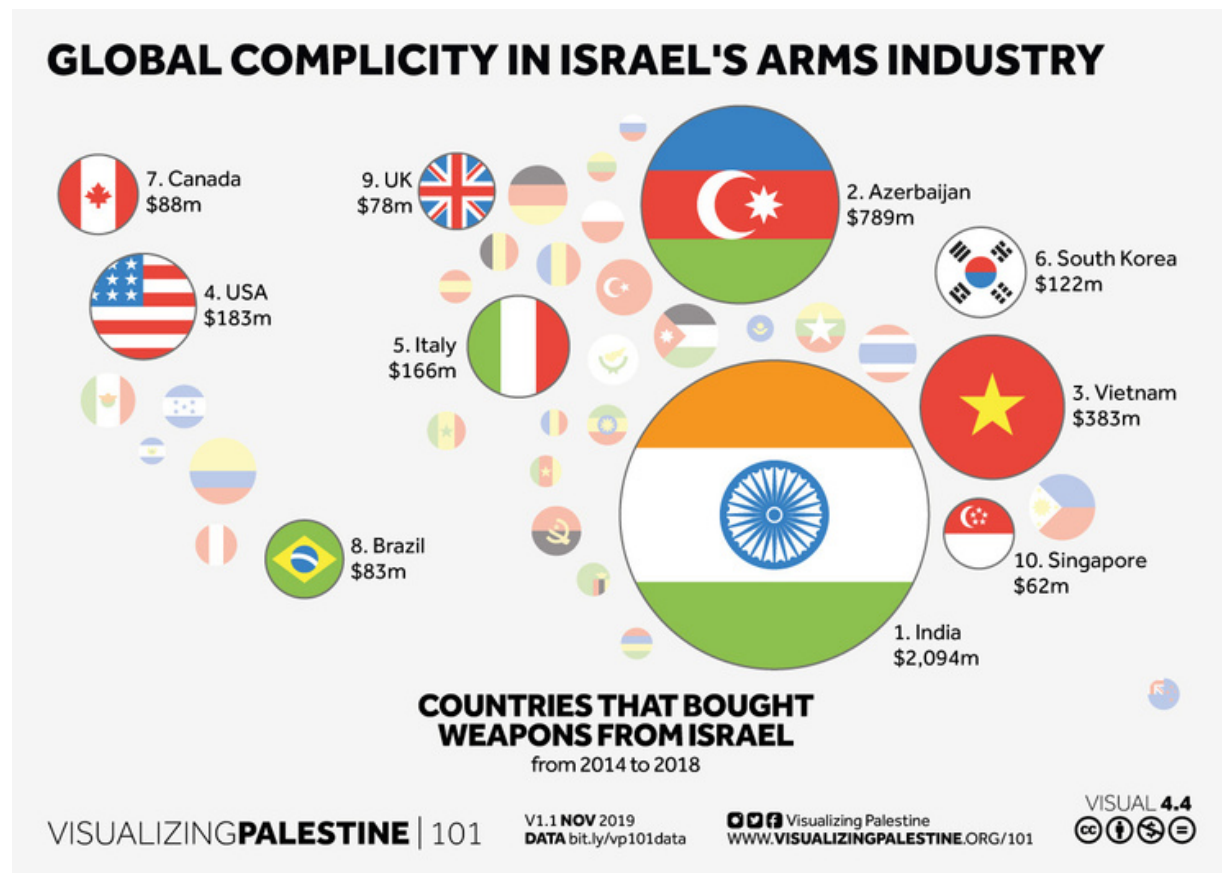
Israel's defense industry is a key source of revenue for the state and is overwhelmingly export-oriented. Some 75% of Israeli defense production goes to overseas customers, and Israel is notorious for its "no questions asked" policy. Despite decades-long attempts to foster its domestic production of high-tech weapons, India must often purchase them overseas. Consequently, **India is now Israel's #1 customer and spends heavily on drones, missile systems, sensors, radar, and electro-optic systems**. These sales are mutually beneficial, providing India with high-tech weapons and Israel with cash.

There are huge sums involved in these arms sales. The Indian government has refused to answer questions from Members of its own Parliament about the value of arms contracts with Israel. There are also allegations of corruption, specifically the bribery of Indian officials. In 2012, as punishment for such practices, India even barred the state-owned Israel Military Industries (along with five other foreign defense firms) from bidding on Indian defense contracts for 10 years.

Robust arms sales have led to increased cooperation between the militaries and intelligence agencies of India and Israel.

Since 2001, at least eight defense chiefs from Israel and India have visited the other country. The “national security apparatuses brainstorm together on internal security...” and even have a “Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism” that was established in 2002. The Indian Navy regularly conducts port visits to the Israeli city of Haifa and has even conducted “passage exercises” with the Israeli Navy.²⁹ “Centers of Excellence” in various Indian states where the latest Israeli horticultural technologies are on display.

Israel also advises India on water management and recycling and has signed a Technical Cooperation Agreement with India for wastewater management. Israel will be setting up two “Agri Centres of Excellence” in Kashmir. This will mark the **first direct presence of Israel on the ground in Kashmir**, besides the guns, Israel has also parlayed its growing arms trade with India into other sectors.



In terms of agriculture, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 1993, a “Work Plan” in 2006, and an “Action Plan” in 2008. **Israel currently operates pellets, and training used to kill and blind Kashmiris.**

d) The Indo-American Arms Trade in Recent Years

The weapons that the U.S. supplies to India are used to occupy, kill, and suppress Kashmiris. Major sales of American arms to India began even before Narendra Modi was elected Prime Minister in 2014. Direct arms sales from America to India have grown despite the State Department's reports about India's assault on religious minorities, the press, and the judiciary. In the last five years alone, the U.S. government has delivered hundreds of aircraft, missiles, and bombs to India.

In 2019 & 2020, **India signed two \$100-million contracts for around 72,000 assault rifles with Sig Sauer**, a firearms company based in New Hampshire. These contracts equipped India's Kashmir-based forces with weapons to be directly used on Kashmiris. In 2020, StandwithKashmir launched a campaign to shed some light on and halt the deal.

In the past couple of years, India has exponentially increased its defense partnerships with the United States & Boeing. **India is not only using Boeing's weapons to occupy Kashmir but is also using it to promote warfare at the borders with Pakistan & China.**

Last year, the U.S. offered India Boeing's F-15EX fighter jet following another week of military tensions at Kashmir's borders with China & Pakistan. India has become so bloodthirsty for weapons that it prioritized arms trade deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars over medical aid when COVID cases spiked across India in March 2020.



In addition to the skirmishes at the border between India and China, tensions have also been high at the Line of Control between Pakistan and India on both sides of the borders of Kashmir. Pakistan alleges that India violated the ceasefire more than 3,000 times in 2020, killing at least 28 civilians and wounding more than 249. Kashmir is a flashpoint among three giant nuclear powers, and Boeing is fueling warfare by further arming India. In July 2021, Boeing and Tata announced their delivery of the AH-64 Apache combat helicopter for the Indian army. The Apache is an attack helicopter meant to be used in combat on Kashmir's borders near Pakistan and China. Boeing currently has 62 aircraft in operation with the Indian military – Apache, Chinook, P8I, C17 – and plans to become the third-largest civil aviation supplier in the world with over 2,000 Boeing aircraft coming into India over the next 20 years.

1 BOEING & ISRAEL

248 PALESTINIANS WERE KILLED IN ISRAEL'S ASSAULT ON GAZA IN MAY OF 2021. ALMOST 100,000 HAVE BEEN DISPLACED FROM THEIR HOMES.

IN MAY 2021, BOEING COMPLETED AN ARMS DEAL WORTH \$735,000,000 WITH ISRAEL.

BOEING PRODUCES APACHE HELICOPTERS, HELLFIRE AND HARPOON MISSILES, GUIDING SYSTEMS, AND DENSE INERT METAL EXPLOSIVES (DIME). ALL HAVE BEEN USED BY THE ISRAELI MILITARY TO KILL OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY IN GAZA, WEST BANK, AND LEBANON.

2 BOEING & KASHMIR

KASHMIR CONTINUES TO BE THE WORLD'S MOST MILITARIZED ZONE, WITH 1 INDIAN SOLDIER FOR EVERY 10 CIVILIANS LIVING IN THE REGION.

RECENTLY, THE UNITED STATES APPROVED AN \$82 MILLION ARMS DEAL WITH INDIA, INCLUDING BOEING'S HARPOON JOINT COMMON TEST SET.

BOEING IS ARMING THE INDIAN ARMY TO OCCUPY & KILL THE KASHMIRI PEOPLE BY MANUFACTURING WEAPONS FOR THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

3 BOEING AT THE BORDER

BOEING HELD SEVENTEEN DIFFERENT CONTRACTS WITH THE U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PATROL AMOUNTING TO \$1.4 BILLION BETWEEN 2006 AND 2019.

IN 2005, BOEING WAS AWARDED A CONTRACT TO BUILD A SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM OF RADAR AND CAMERA TOWERS ALONG THE BORDER.

BOEING PROFITS FROM CRIMINALIZATION AND BORDER MILITARIZATION.

High-level intelligence officials from the U.S. and India convene twice a year (once in India and once in the U.S.). American Special Operations forces also frequently train with their Indian counterparts in exercises at Yudh Abhyas (held annually in Alaska), Tarkash (2015, 2017), Vajra Prahar (2016, 2018), and Malabar (2017).

Since 1947, the Indian occupation forces in Kashmir have killed an estimated 100,000 Kashmiris and made Kashmir the most militarized region on Earth. **The ratio of Indian personnel to Kashmiri civilians is 1:10**

India can get away with purchasing weapons so it can continue committing war crimes and murder in Kashmir because of its upper hand in Europe and the U.S., especially as it is seen as a rival to China. India is seen as an important region within the geopolitical space.



e) Social Media Censorship: How Tech Giants Aid Indian Occupation in Kashmir

Social media corporations such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have continually engaged in the silencing of Kashmiri voices in the digital space by **removing content, suspending user accounts, and engaging in algorithmic manipulation** of content critical of India's military occupation and settler-colonialism in the region.

01

Kashmiri Voices Are Silenced Across Social Media

The advent of social media has dramatically transformed the realm of political activism in Indian-occupied Kashmir. However, the freedoms of speech and expression of Kashmiri people both within and beyond Kashmir are heavily suppressed by India. Platforms have sided with India's colonial regime in Kashmir and are complicit in the erasure of Kashmiri digital rights and the ongoing digital blackout of Kashmir.

Kashmiri users say they are censored in different ways – their accounts are disabled, suspended, and permanently deleted. Users say their **account privileges are restricted or account content is removed**.

Facebook and Twitter have continually sided with the Indian authorities' weaponization of law and policy to curb Kashmir-related reportage and activism in the digital space.

In 2018, David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on the freedom of expression and opinion, wrote to Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey about the company's decision to censor Kashmir-related content and profiles as indicative of its caving in to "government demands for content and account removals."

Click [here](#) for the 2021 report on censorship in Kashmir by StandWithKashmir.

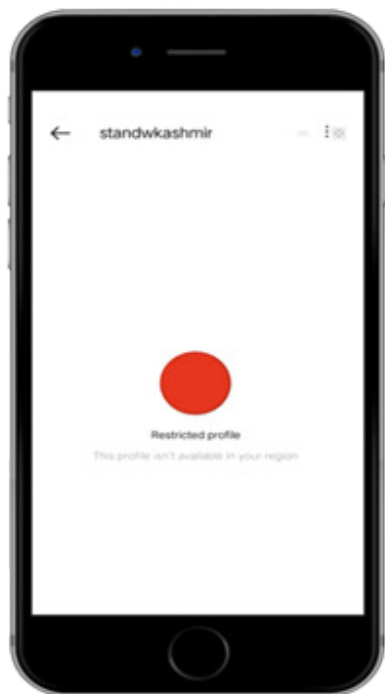
02

Corporations Are Siding with The Fascist Indian Government to Censor Kashmir

In one instance, documents leaked to the New York Times by Facebook employees revealed that the company monitors political speech globally using a set of biased rules which favor governments and the far right. In an overt government-friendly strategy, Facebook rules instruct moderators to **censor content with the phrase "Free Kashmir"** and deem content that calls for an independent Kashmir illegal in India.

In a leaked internal review of the rise of online censorship, Google employees noted how Facebook and Twitter "were implicated in the censorship of clashes between rebels and Indian authorities in Kashmir...highlighting the platform's complicity with government censorship."





03

How StandwithKashmir Is Heavily Censored

Platforms have persistently censored Stand With Kashmir's (SWK) Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts since August 2019, when the Indian government first imposed a communications blackout to control narratives of India's potential annexation of Kashmir. In September 2019, SWK's Facebook account was blocked from sharing any links.

Since March 2021, **SWK's Facebook and Instagram accounts have been inaccessible to users in Kashmir and India**, who form roughly half of the account audience. Additionally, the reach of its Facebook account has been restricted, such that posts that were earlier organically able to reach eight thousand to ten thousand people can now reach only two thousand or so people.

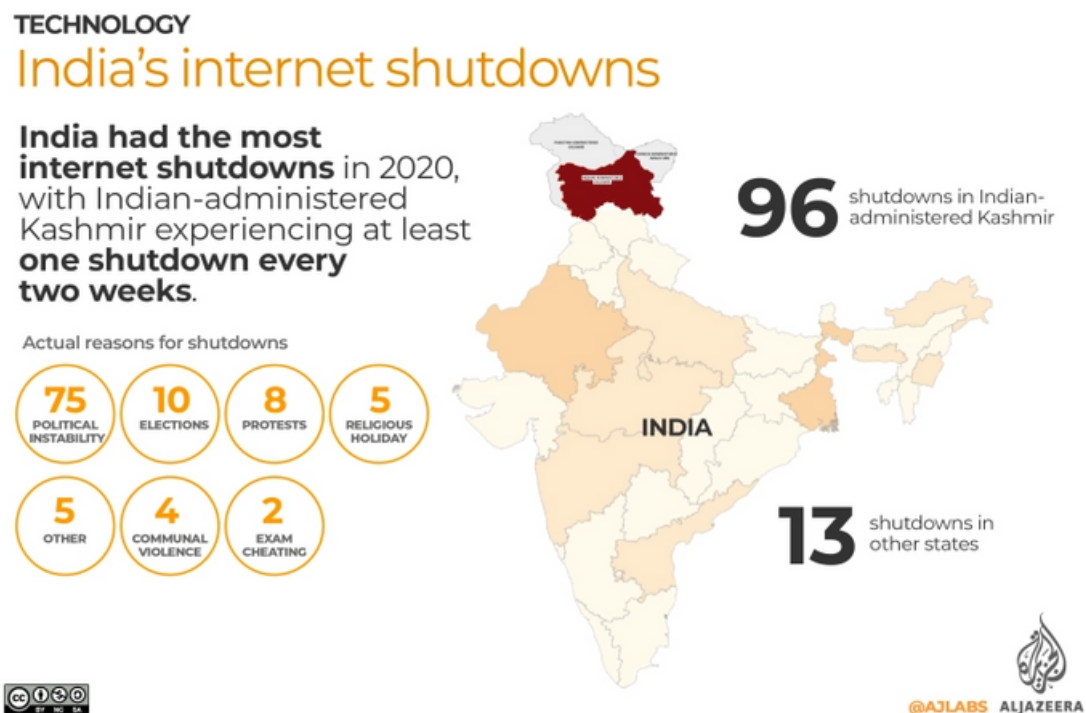
#StopCensoringKashmir



Similarly, Instagram has restricted SWK's account since its formation – simply creating the account took the activist involved three attempts, multiple correspondences with the company, and advocacy through the activist's networks – a privilege many groups do not have access to. Soon after the account was created in August 2019, the account's captioning privileges were taken away. A few days later, the account could not be seen in 53 countries around the world. Since October 2019, Twitter has sent SWK's handle multiple notices for SWK's violations of India's Information Technology Act. **Twitter suspended SWK's account in December 2020 and March 2021**. As with Facebook and Instagram, an analysis of the account data suggests Twitter has restricted SWK's account reach since March 2021.



According to a [report](#) published in August 2022, **Kashmir faces the most internet censorship across the world**. As India accounts for 85% of total internet shutdowns globally, Kashmir has borne the brunt of most of these shutdowns. Apart from this, the Jammu and Kashmir Police, an organ of the Indian occupation of Kashmir, openly threatened social media users in Kashmir with a law that is otherwise intended as a 'counterterrorism' measure. It was under this law that the head of the Kashmir Walla newspaper, Fahad Shah, was later arrested for a social media post. After this arrest, the head of Srinagar's cyber police cell came out with a [warning saying](#) that "we have identified people who are misusing social media and are in the process of identifying more people." According to the Indian government, 'misusing' social media amounts to any posts that highlight the Indian state's actions in Kashmir or question the legitimacy of Indian rule over Kashmir.



As free use of social media continues to pose a threat to occupations around the world and more so to the Indian occupation in Kashmir, the Indian government has started censoring Kashmiris on the internet. India simultaneously incarcerates and threatens social media users for 'anti-national' posts, and also connives with tech companies to keep a **tight grip on the freedom of speech** exercised by the occupied people.

SECTION III

INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S 'NORMALIZATION' POLICIES

INormalization means “colonization of the mind,” whereby the oppressed subject comes to believe that the oppressor’s reality is the only “normal” reality that must be subscribed to, and that the oppression is a fact of life that must be subscribed to. Normalization exercises include having conversations and organizing events where the **occupied territory is casually mentioned and shown to be a natural, seamless, historic part of the occupying state**, as normally as any other part of the same state. Normalization is intended for multiple audiences: the colonized, the broader society of the colonial power, and international audiences. It is meant to show that everything is fine, people are happy with India, and the only trouble is instigated by outside powers (namely, Pakistan). The colonized peoples’ participation in such events also normalizes the occupying power and their presence and legitimacy.

In recent times, there has been exponential growth in the number of normalization events organized by the Indian state in Kashmir.

a) Promotion of Tourism

Tourism has been one of India’s primary weapons for normalizing its occupation. It is often highlighted that the economy of Kashmir is heavily dependent on tourism, when in fact it only contributes to **less than 7% of its GDP**. The India-installed Jammu and Kashmir government’s official website states that “Jammu and Kashmir’s economy is predominantly dependent on agriculture and allied activities.” However, India has been long making efforts to kill the agricultural industry in Kashmir. This year, they completely destroyed the otherwise thriving apple industry.

On the other hand, tourists from all over India are invited to Kashmir in the name of events like tulip fests, to make sure the casual discourse of Kashmir being an “integral” and desirable part of Kashmir remains in popular conversation in the broader Indian culture. With record numbers of Indian tourists visiting Kashmir, India is also able to tell the international community that things are “normal” in Kashmir.



Indian tourist/influencer posing with a "Kashmir is safe" sign on Instagram, as part of India's normalization of Kashmir campaign.

b) Organizing of state-sponsored events

Music Festivals

In March 2022, the Gulmarg Development Authority (a subsidiary of the state tourism department), in collaboration with the Indian army, organized the “Amrit Jyoti Gulmarg Winter Festival.” Among other things, this was highlighted as a masterful musical event that enthralled audiences. As crowds from all over India filled Gulmarg and casually claimed Kashmir as their own, the festival’s strong Hindi name itself rang alarm bells. Historically, Kashmir has never been home to any Hindi-speaking community, and this festival was clearly an open arrow of Indian colonialism fired at Kashmiris.



Indian army at the Gulmarg festival
Photo: India Blooms

Literary Festivals

Recently, writers from all over India got together in Kashmir for a literary fest organized by Kumaon. These writers were predominantly Kashmiri Pandits who align with the colonial agenda of the Indian state in Kashmir. While the founder of the Kumaon Lit Fest casually claimed Kashmir to be India, she also urged people to “forget the past 30 years of conflict and talk about another side of Kashmir.” This blatant condoning and dismissal of the atrocities waged by the Indian state in Kashmir is exactly why activities like these are facilitated by the Indian state in Kashmir.



Writers at the Kumaon Literary Festival
Photo: Kumaon Literary Festival

c) Militarized Humanitarianism

Involving occupying forces in visibly “humanitarian” work is a smokescreen used by colonizing and occupying forces. India’s occupation has been using this tactic for a long time now and only seems to have upped its use in recent times. The Indian army in Kashmir is seen organizing talent hunts, self-defense workshops for young girls, educational tours, film festivals, sports tournaments, etc. Meanwhile, **Indian forces have been responsible for killing 1081 civilians between just the years 2008-2018.**

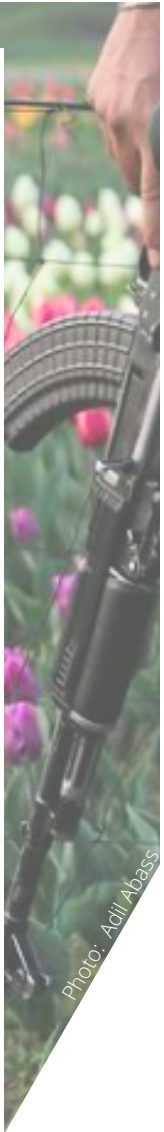
While India continues to wage war against Kashmiris and their desire for freedom from the Indian occupation, the Indian state has amplified the use of normalization. Normalization of occupation and building of discourses where Kashmir is casually mentioned as a part of India and where it is deemed to be happy and thriving under Indian colonization has a larger impact on Kashmir's freedom struggle than one may assume. It allows India to put up a smokescreen that impacts global solidarity.

With more Indians visiting Kashmir, the state's plan of creating more 'desire' for Kashmir & Kashmiris in the minds of the average Indian - and thus the need to violently hold on to Kashmir - is accomplished.

Often, local Kashmiri artists are used by the state to carry out this agenda, either under security threats or by implying that these festivals and events are unconnected to the state.

People are often forced or paid to attend these events to show large, happy Kashmiri crowds. Unfortunately, some participate willingly, knowing the implications of their involvement in such events.

Resisting these normalization events and seeing them for what they are form a huge part of the resistance against the Indian occupation. Kashmiris should resist taking part, attending, or sponsoring such events. As the state moves towards "normalization", we must also actively monitor and make noise around these insidious events and developments and NOT allow India's occupation to be normalized.



SECTION IV

ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL RAMIFICATIONS SINCE 2019

“Economic Development” was the buzzword as the Indian Home Minister moved to abrogate Article 370 and with it, the semi-autonomous status of Kashmir. However, the ground reality since that day itself and in its long-term aftermath has been different. Small businesses have collapsed, and the fruit industry has been made to suffer immense losses.

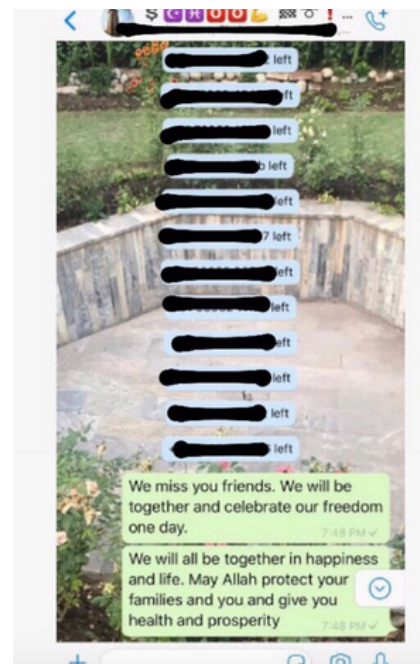
Most significantly, in its report for May-August 2022, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy pegged the unemployment rate in Jammu and Kashmir for the month of August at a staggering 32.75%, the highest in the previous six years. During that period, Kashmir also saw a comprehensive shutdown for six months in the aftermath of pro-freedom rebel Burhan Wani’s killing, yet the employment statistics from that time were better.

Here are some of the other ways the settler-colonial developments of the past three years have affected the economy of Kashmir:

a) The ‘Democratic World’s’ Longest Communication Blockade

In preparation for the abrogation and to suppress resistance from Kashmiris, the Indian government has enforced the ‘democratic world’s longest communication blockade in the region. Internet and telecommunications (cell phones as well as landlines) were suspended for months, which resulted in irreversible damage to the Kashmir economy.

Along with the loss of half a million jobs, the estimated monetary losses due to internet suspension were up to Rs. 4,00,00 crores (\$5 Billion).



WhatsApp Screenshots showing Kashmir based users exiting groups after months of no activity due to the internet ban.

WhatsApp accounts generally expire after 120 days of inactivity.

b) Kashmiris Forced to Flee Homes for Jobs Elsewhere

The communication blockade meant thousands of young Kashmiri entrepreneurs who were involved in internet-based businesses had to close and leave Kashmir to keep earning a livelihood. Shayan Nabi, the owner of a small online ad agency before August 2019, was rendered jobless due to the communication clampdown. As his small start-up failed to cope with the lack of work brought about by the internet suspension, he was forced to shut down and move to Delhi in search of a job.

"It is depressing to be jobless. I want to go home, but then what will I tell my family? I left a bank job for this. I dropped out of an MBA for this. Because I wanted to do something of my own. But more than angry, I feel helpless. What can I be angry about and against whom?"

Shayan Nabi, Kashmiri rendered jobless due to 2019 communication clampdown. Guardian (Jan 2020)

c) Local Businesses Killed by Three Consecutive Lockdowns

Kashmiris who have invested and saved funds for years to buy property or vehicles for a business have suffered immense losses. Many of them are unable to pay back their bank loans and have lost their businesses. The communication clampdown played a major role in this, as did two subsequent COVID lockdowns. Many people have been forced to take money from friends and family to make ends meet, placing them in even greater financial debt.

A year after the abrogation, a houseboat owner based out of Dal Lake in Srinagar told Al Jazeera that "We've not earned a single penny for a year now. All we have are these boats. We don't have any other means to earn."

After the abrogation, Abdul Rashid, a flower seller from Srinagar, told Al Jazeera that "It was not just a political change. It destroyed our livelihood." Rashid lost his flower-selling business and was forced to change professions to sell cigarettes along the banks of Dal Lake to keep feeding his family.

d) Business Licenses Handed to Indian companies

While Kashmiris were reeling under the communication clampdown, the Indian government decided to auction the tenders for mineral extraction in Kashmir online, making it impossible for Kashmiris to apply. This was a deliberate attempt to make sure that an overwhelming majority of these licenses were allotted to Indians and not Kashmiris.



Photo: Nissar Ahmad

More than 200 mineral blocks along the Jhelum River and its tributaries across all 10 districts of the region were opened to the mining of sand, boulders, gravel, and other riverbed materials. "It is not injustice but murder with us and our families," a local contractor Abdul Ahad told Anadolu Agency at the time.

"The condition and clauses which were incorporated in the bidding process gave a clear hint that the process is aimed to hand over mineral blocks to outside companies"

Muhammad Maqbool Parra, President of the Quarry Association

Official data shows that in the main city, Srinagar, all 10 mining blocks were bagged by non-local contractors against the bid amount of 50.8 million Indian rupees (approx. \$680,000). Similarly, in the Baramulla district, 38 blocks of minerals fetched 201.5 million rupees (over \$2.7 million). Of these, 26 were secured by non-local contractors. In Budgam, of the total of seven blocks auctioned at INR 4.67 crore, four on the river Jhelum went to contractors from Punjab, while Kashmiri contractors somehow managed to bag the remaining three blocks on tributaries of Jhelum. Outside companies won mining rights over more than 60% of the blocks in the Pulwama district. Overall, an unprecedented 70% of the total mining contracts went to Indians.

"This government has pushed us to the wall. They have robbed us of our livelihood. In the present crisis, they have left us with no means of survival," said Ghulam Mohammad, a local contractor. He added, "I look after this river like my own child who needs care and protection, but how will a non-local who has no knowledge about it understand this?"

Detailed List Of Successful Bidders In District Srinagar

Block No.	Block Name	Successful Bidder	Minimum Reserve Bid (Rs.)	Bid Amount (Rs.)
1/SGR	Downstream Jhelum River Laxan Bridge to U/C Pandrathan Bridge	Kishori Lal	20000/-	190000/-
2/SGR	Downstream Jhelum River under construction Pandrathan Bridge to Under Construction Gandabal Foot Bridge	Battan Lal Jalla	50000/-	210000/-
3/SGR	Downstream Jhelum River under construction Gandabal Foot Bridge to Water Scheme Pashahabagh	Parmohan Singh	80000/-	720000/-
4/SGR	Downstream Jhelum River Water Scheme Padshahbagh to Rajbagh Foot Bridge	Mangrathir Singh	80000/-	1066000/-
5/SGR	Downstream Jhelum River Qamarwari Cement Bridge to Lift Irrigation Guzarbal Noorbagh	Umesh Kumar Sharma	80000/-	405000/-
6/SGR	Downstream Jhelum River Lift Irrigation Guzarbal Noorbagh to Panipora Bridge	Kamwarit Singh	50000/-	310000/-
7/SGR	Downstream Jhelum River under construction Panipora Bridge to under construction Choochan Noorbagh Bridge	Hira Singh	20000/-	1622000/-
8/SGR	Downstream Jhelum River under construction Choochan Noorbagh Bridge to Tengpora Bridge	Karanvir Singh	80000/-	780000/-
9/SGR	Downstream Jhelum River Tengpora Bridge to village Hargopal Chek Mujund	Umesh Kumar Sharma	80000/-	1180000/-
10/SGR	Upstream Jhelum River Lift Irrigation Panzinara to Hargopal Chek Mujund	Rupesh Aggarwal	60000/-	200000/-
Total			290000	50810000/-

List of mineral blocks of Srinagar & the bid winners
Photo : Wire

S. No.	Block No.	Description with Area	Name & Address of the First Highest Bidder (H1)	Highest Bid Amount (Rs.)
1	1/BUD	Kadlbal Bridge to Zampora Bridge D/Stream River Jhelum (9.98Ha)	Arvind Kumar Gupta S/O: Ram Chand Gupta R/O: H.No. 115-E, BRS Nagar Rangpur Nagar Ludhiana Punjab	1315000
2	2/BUD	Zampora Bridge to Raksholuna D/Stream River Jhelum (5.91 Ha)	Jagdish Aggarwal S/O: Ram Chand R/O: H.No. 179, Near Panjor Mandir, Mohalla Anandpur, Pathankot Punjab	3116000
3	3/BUD	Alhabad Foot Bridge to Bag/Shakar Exit point U/Stream River Jhelum (7.73 Ha)	Kapil Aggarwal S/O: Jagdish Aggarwal R/O: H.No. 179, Near Panjor Mandir, Mohalla Anandpur, Pathankot Punjab	1006000
4	4/BUD	Alhabad Foot Bridge to Golpora (Sattbani) D/Stream River Jhelum (6.70 Ha)	Arashdeep Singh S/O: Balraj Singh R/O: Faridabad Gurdaspur Punjab	883000
5	10/BUD	Panzan Bridge to Dreypan Bridge U/Stream Shalganga Nallah (10.00 Ha)	Abdul Rashid Mir S/O: Ghulam Ahmad Mir R/O: 99-Markazi Jama Masjid Rawalpindi, Beenu Budgam	13079000
6	11/BUD	Chadoora Old Bridge to Hanggund D/Stream DhoothGanga Nallah (3.75 Ha)	Danish Yousof S/O: Mohd Yousof Mir R/O: Dounghama Kakpora J&K	11733000
7	12/BUD	Chadoora Foot Bridge to Sogam Bridge U/Stream Dhooth Ganga Nallah (4.90 Ha)	Rauf Ahmad Dar S/O: Gh. Qadir Dar R/O: Dangarpura Awantipora Pulwama	15579000
Total				46731000

List of mineral blocks from Budgam
Photo : Wire

e) Non-locals Hired for Government Jobs in Kashmir

The Indian government began hiring non-locals for government jobs, which were earlier reserved only for Kashmiri locals. Due to the minimal existence of private-sector jobs, Kashmiris heavily depend on the government for their livelihoods, so this new recruitment policy has tremendous implications for the settler-colonial project of India in Kashmir by taking away jobs from Kashmiris. Later, the Indian government announced that these jobs will be reserved for “domiciles” of Jammu and Kashmir. The category of domicile was expanded to include Indian soldiers and bureaucrats deputed to Kashmir, their families, as well as outside laborers.

At the same time, this “protection” was extended to only Group D and entry-level non-gazetted posts and not to all levels and forms of government employment. This means that other levels of bureaucracy, such as District Commissioners, are now run by Indian settlers.

f) Driving Kashmir Towards a Settler Economy

The Indian state has also resorted to Indianizing Kashmiri businesses and pushing Kashmiris towards a settler economy.

01

Painting Kashmiri Businesses with “Indian” Tags

Expo 2020 Dubai to See India’s Jammu and Kashmir Pitch for Global Investments”, read a headline from GulfNews. The headline proves why the participation of Kashmiri businesses in such global events is facilitated by the Indian state. While it allows them to keep driving the bandwagon of development in the region, at the same time it gives them the perfect platform and opportunity to show Kashmir and Kashmiris as “Indian” globally, eliminating Kashmir’s unique identity.

Talking at the IIT BHU Global Alumni Meet at Santa Clara, California recently, the Lieutenant Governor of J&K, Manoj Sinha, said that “J&K has potential to emerge as a powerhouse of prosperity.” Even though the region’s economy and employment levels have been on a steep downward trend since 2019, statements like these come with India’s “owning Kashmir” intention. On the ground in Kashmir, local small businesses and shops were served with an official diktat this year to hoist the Indian flag over their establishments on India’s Independence Day. These businesses and shop owners were threatened with consequences in return for their failure to do so.



02

Restricting Geographical Access of Kashmiri Businesses to “Indian Markets”

Kashmir holds a strategic position in the subcontinent, as it shares borders with Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and India. Historically, Kashmir had trade relations with Central Asia and parts of East Asia via the Silk Road. Since 1947, **Kashmir's economy has been restricted to only importing/exporting to the Indian market**, a colonial maneuver that mimics British mercantilist economic policies of the 18th-20th century. Even the minuscule cross-border trade that was restarted between Kashmir and Pakistan in 2008 was stopped in 2019.

The Modi-led Indian government has been pushing for cross-border trade with Indonesia through Odisha, with the African continent through Gujarat (where Modi was the Chief Minister and oversaw a pogrom against Muslims), and the completion of the trilateral highway from northeast India to Cambodia between India-Myanmar-Thailand. At the same time, it continues to restrict Kashmiri businesses.

Thus, while maintaining military control over Kashmir on one side, India also continues to push it towards a settler economy. All Kashmiri businesses are completely dependent on the Indian market for survival, despite Kashmir's rich history of international trade.

03

Destroying Kashmir's Fruit Industry

Recently, India seems to have taken the next step in consolidating its occupation of Kashmir's economy. After cutting off Kashmiri businesses from cross-border trade, it has started to hurt the once-booming fruit industry of the region. As it compels Kashmir's apple industry to sell exclusively to the Indian market, it has been making concrete efforts to destroy it. These efforts have ranged from trapping fruit-laden trucks on the highway between India and Kashmir for weeks altogether to facilitating the illegal import of Iranian apples into the Indian market, resulting in a dramatic drop in rates and huge losses to Kashmiri traders.

Along with the apples, the walnut industry has also met the same fate with the import of California walnuts.

However, the fruit industry is not the only one being targeted. As the ecological consequences of the Amarnath Yatra and the over-tourism being promoted by India in Kashmir put a drastic strain on Kashmir's environment, deforestation has been another major issue. The Indian state itself has a hand to play in the deforestation. It cuts apple trees



Photo: Nisar Ahmad



to hurt the Kashmiri economy, and chops down hundreds of thousands of other kinds of trees to drive development projects to show the integration of Kashmir into the broader developmental map of India. Apart from contributing to global warming, this deforestation has also become a life hazard for local Kashmiris. With lessening forest cover, wild animals invade human-inhabited areas and naturally indulge in attacks on locals. At the same time, the Indian government has also shown a lackluster attitude toward stopping the poaching of the indigenous Kashmiri deer Hangul, with a number of the magnificent creatures being reduced to hundreds. One wonders who, in the world's most heavily militarized zone, might have access to weapons that can kill an animal as fast as the Hangul?

As India desperately moves to consolidate its settler-colonial project in Kashmir, the economy of the region continues to be driven into the ground. This disaster is facilitated by the Indian government, which seeks to monetarily incentivize people to move away from cultivating rice – which is the staple diet of Kashmiris – towards high-density apple cultivation, and then ensuring that the trucks carrying these apples remain stranded on the highway. This causes the apples to rot. Later, Indian traders buy the product at cheap rates, which hurts Kashmiri traders.

All these attempts – and others – exist to ensure Kashmir's economy remains strangled under Indian settler-colonial rule, and enable further demographic engineering.



Photo: Nisar Ahmad

SECTION V

TECHNOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF OCCUPATION

In this section, we will talk about ways India is using Technology to further its occupation in Kashmir.

a) Surveillance

With surveillance of the daily life of Kashmiris at the hands of the Indian state touching new heights every day, technology is now being employed to take surveillance to a new stage. Drones and facial recognition technology are being aggressively deployed.

01

J&K Police Drone Surveillance

In September 2022, the Jammu and Kashmir Police's official Twitter handle shared a 31-second hi-res video of a locality in Srinagar, recorded through a drone camera. In the invasive video, they recorded a bird's-eye view of courtyards, rooftops, and the public park of the area. The [tweet](#) read:

Aerial surveillance was going on in suspected localities of Srinagar looking for anti-socials, criminals, terrorists, OGWs (over-the-ground workers of militants), etc. using modern drones with high-resolution cameras, these may not be visible from the ground but be assured that life, property of citizens will be safeguarded

Earlier the same day, a high-level meeting of different Indian forces was held in Srinagar. They discussed the 'security' of Srinagar city, and especially 'digital and high-tech surveillance'. A JKP spokesperson later

revealed that during this meeting, the Director General of the Police (DGP), "directed the officers to strengthen area dominance and night patrolling in grey areas. The DGP stressed placing the surprise Nakas (checkpoints) and ambushes to check for any suspect movement. He directed the use of modern gadgets including drones and CCTVs for area dominance."



Photo: Dar Yasin



02

Facial Recognition Technology in Kashmir

In October 2021, the J&K Police talked about 'stepping up' **efforts to bring the entire Srinagar city under 'CCTV' surveillance** to deploy facial recognition tech in the region. At the time, 300 high-security cameras were already functional across the city. The JKP proposed to team up with the Srinagar 'Municipal' Corporation to achieve better coverage of the city for the facial recognition project. This also goes to show how a seemingly 'apolitical' body like the Municipal Corporation can play a very important role for India when it comes to cracking down on Kashmiris. The development narrative India has been trying to build around Kashmir is nothing but a rebranding of the settler-colonial project in more acceptable terms. The use of such surveillance technology is deployed by authoritarian governments, with much criticism from the international community. However, India enjoys complete impunity, even as it consistently violates all democratic norms.

While new surveillance tactics are undoubtedly a violation of the privacy of Kashmiris and the principles of basic human decency, the 'checkpoints' that the DGP talked about have had a reputation for harassing, and even murdering, innocent Kashmiris. This goes to show that high-tech surveillance is complemented by brute force to ensure the pro-freedom narrative on the ground can be crippled.

b) Pro-India Twitter Ops

In September 2022, a Stanford report revealed that alongside the surveillance project to advance its broader settler-colonial project in Kashmir, India has developed a new strategy of 'Twitter Ops'. Under this strategy, the report revealed, there has been exponential growth in the number of 'pro-India, proud Kashmiri' accounts. The report is based on 15 datasets of information operations shared by Twitter in the Twitter Moderation Research Consortium on August 24, 2022. In reference to the pro-India proud Kashmiri network, the report reads:

The network tweeted primarily in English, but also in Hindi and Urdu. Accounts claimed to be proud Kashmiris and relatives of Indian soldiers. Tweets praised the Indian Army's military successes and provision of services in India-administered Kashmir and criticized the militaries of China and Pakistan. Two accounts existed to target specific individuals who were perceived as enemies of the Indian government.



The report also claims that an official Indian army Twitter handle was suspended across multiple social media platforms: "On June 7, 2019, Asian News International tweeted that Twitter had suspended the official Chinar Corps account the previous day, then reinstated it. This was also reported in The Print. In February 2022, Indian media outlets, including The Indian Express, English Jagran, and New Indian Express reported that the Facebook and Instagram accounts for the Chinar Corps were suspended on January 28, 2022, for 'coordinated inauthentic behaviour'. The English Jagran article says the source of this information was 'Army officials'.

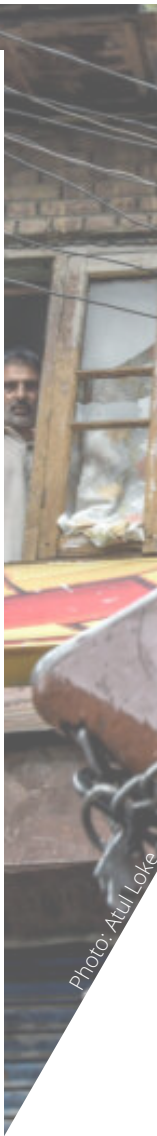
These articles note that the Chinar Corps Instagram account was restored on February 9, 2022. The Chinar Corps Facebook Page appears to have been restored on either the same day or the following day. Consistent with these news articles, we note that the Chinar Corps Facebook Page and Instagram account did not post between January 28, 2022, and February 9, 2022. The Chinar Corps Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts are all currently live.

Even though the report authors claim they had no proof linking the pro-India proud Kashmiri network to Chinar Corps, they offered some interesting observations:

- 01 The content of the Twitter network is consistent with the Chinar Corps' objectives in praising the work of the Indian Army in India-occupied Kashmir.
- 02 The official Chinar Corps Twitter account, @ChinarcorpsIA, is the seventh most mentioned or retweeted account in the network.
- 03 A handful of the Twitter account bios are linked to Facebook or Instagram accounts. Some of these Meta accounts are live, others are down.

A Chronology Of Events

June 6, 2019	June 7, 2019	January 28, 2022	January 31, 2022
Twitter suspends Chinar Corps account	Twitter reinstates Chinar Corps account	Facebook Page and Instagram account for Chinar Corps suspended	Oldest visible Chinar Corps tweet, despite account created in 2017



February 9/10, 2022

Facebook Page
and Instagram
account for
Chinar Corps
reinstated

March 29, 2022

Last visible
tweet from
Twitter
takedown

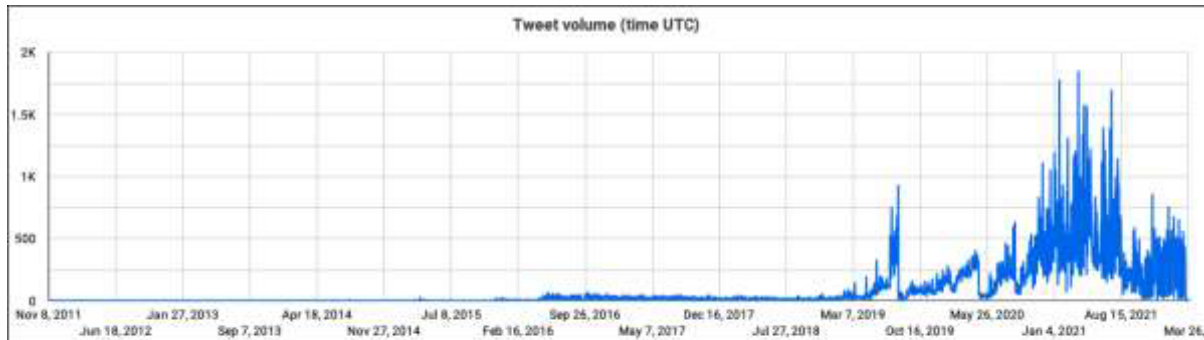


Figure 1: Tweet frequency over time in the suspended network.

Source for graphs: Stanford Internet Observatory

The report observed that many of the accounts in the network claimed to be Indians, often Kashmiris, and frequently said they were in Kashmir. One bio said “Proud Indian and Proud Kashmiri. My Heart belongs to Kashmir, Soul to India and Life to Humanity.” According to the report, “It was common for account bios to say that they were relatives of Indian army soldiers; one, for example, said, “My father served in the Indian Army was martyred.” It further states that many of these accounts claimed to be “freelance reporters or volunteers” based out of Kashmir, or students, and one of the suspended accounts even claimed to be a Kashmir-based digital marketing firm.



A suspended profile claiming to be a proud Kashmiri. The profile photo is also used by a user with a different name on the freelancing website Fiverr. (Source: Stanford Internet Observatory)



Left: An archived tweet from a suspended account.

Right: The Getty stock image that the suspended account used as a profile photo. (Source: Stanford Internet Observatory)

It was also observed that most of the profile photos used by these accounts were stock images downloaded from the internet.

The reports further noted that while several accounts were specifically targeting Kashmiri journalists, activists, and politicians, some also targeted Pakistan.



(Source: Stanford Internet Observatory)

The @KashmirTraitors bio is linked to a YouTube channel, Traitors of Kashmir, created in 2014. The Twitter accounts and YouTube channel targeted specific individuals, focusing on what the account deemed “anti-India” journalists, calling reporters “#whitecollarterrorist,” for example; saying that they were working to corrupt the minds of Kashmiris; and accusing them of taking money from Pakistan.

The report concludes by saying that its authors have only been able to scratch the surface of what is in actuality a large political network. It observes that:

This network promotes the activities of the Indian Army, particularly in Kashmir, and criticized Pakistan and China. Two accounts in particular, @KashmirTraitors and @KashmirTraitor1, stood out for targeting individuals deemed anti-India. While we were not able to determine who ran these suspended Twitter accounts, we note that official Chinara Corps Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts were temporarily suspended in the past, and Indian Army officials told reporters that the stated reason for the Facebook and Instagram suspensions was Meta’s policy on coordinated inauthentic behaviour. The content of the Twitter network discussed in this report was consistent with the objectives of the Chinara Corps.

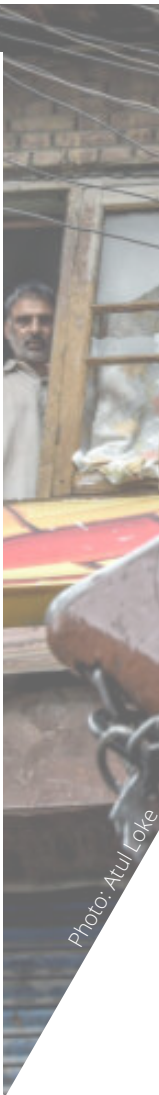


Photo: Atul Loke

NON-UTLIZING CULTURAL NORMALCY

India's settler-colonial project in Kashmir is being advanced on several fronts by the Indian state. In this report, SWK has tried to map a summary of the recent strategies India is employing. While an all-out armed war against Kashmiris remains in force on the ground, India has been opening other fronts of this war at a rapid and aggressive pace. These new fronts include psychological warfare tactics like crippling the religious freedom of Kashmiri Muslims while allowing Hindu festivals to thrive under the state's security cover. At the same time, India is moving to cultivate a complete dependency of the Kashmiri economy on India by stifling local Kashmiri production, importing illegal competition to Kashmiri businesses, and tagging Kashmiri businesses with the 'Indian' tag.

A major part of this new war is informed by brutal crackdowns on any 'unfavorable' or critical voices. These include researchers who document the occupation and its tactics, human rights defenders who document human rights violations, teachers who present the history of Kashmir, journalists who speak truth to power, and students who indulge in politically conscious activities. People belonging to these categories have either been incarcerated under the plethora of barbaric colonial laws that India continues to use in Kashmir or intimidated into self-censorship as the state continues to fire employees who engage in 'anti-national' activities – which may even include a Facebook post – or arrest others for an article written more than a decade ago.

A discourse of normalization built around the idea that "Kashmir is an Integral Part of India" and "Kashmir is Normal" is another major strategy India has been aggressively using. For the purpose of normalization, tourism is being promoted, and Indians are being encouraged to visit Kashmir. This results in the "claiming" of Kashmir by these Indian tourists and the building of a discourse where Kashmir is casually mentioned as a part of India, in a bid to erase the 75-year-long freedom struggle of Kashmiris. Music and 'cultural' festivals are also facilitated by the state apparatus to push the "normalcy" and "Kashmir is Safe" narrative, obscuring the reality that while Indian tourists are safe in Kashmir, enforced disappearances and fake encounters with Kashmiris continue at an alarming rate.



Along with the crackdown on dissent that India has been able to utilize in its war against Kashmiris has been its high-tech surveillance project. India has increasingly started using drones and facial recognition technology in Kashmir. It maintains that these are used to identify 'notorious' individuals and keep an eye on 'nefarious' activities – namely, the doings of those who hold pro-Kashmir and anti-India sentiments. At the same time, operations like Twitter Ops show how India is striving to build an online discourse to supplement the settler-colonial project being built on the ground.

It is imperative, now more than ever, that India's multi-pronged war against Kashmiris is exposed to the world. The settler-colonial project is in full swing, but unfortunately, the discussion around it is not. In this report, SWK has attempted to highlight what is being done to colonize the land and the minds of people in Kashmir by the self-proclaimed largest democracy in the world.

Please share this report in your networks and raise awareness. SWK also welcomes the organization of events (including talks, teach-ins, panels, book discussions, film/documentary screenings, and solidarity events) around the report, to ensure that a conversation around Kashmir continues around the world as India strives to stifle all discussion of Kashmir both within Kashmir and outside. You can contact us for any logistical support we may be able to provide in terms of experts who can present and explain the report better, or other resources that would assist with the planning of events.

To stay connected with the latest developments in Kashmir, follow [StandWithKashmir](#) on social media and subscribe to our monthly newsletter.



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We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to raise awareness on the occupation of Kashmir.

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