**G-20 and Indian Prison**

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With its typical and proven insensitivity to human life, dignity, and honour, India continued to treat the indigenous people of Kashmir as pygmies when it unexpectedly announced the conduct of a G-20 tourism working group conference in Srinagar from 22nd to 24th May 2023. This move elicited a furious reaction from Pakistan, as well as a much-needed snub from one of the world’s most powerful countries, China, which, like Pakistan, has territorial conflicts with India and has given India a valuable lesson on numerous occasions. It was also a reflection of the G-20 countries’ insensitivity and pursuit of vested interests in attending the contentious meeting despite India’s human rights violations since partition in 1947.

By making a highly contentious, insensitive, and arrogant decision, India turned Srinagar into a large human prison for the indigenous people of the land, trampled and humiliated them with millions of heavily armed security forces, and made a mockery of human rights and human dignity. The unprecedented and extensive security arrangements included a three-tier security system on the ground with police, paramilitary forces, and the National Security Guard (NSG), anti-drone technology was installed to prevent drone attacks, and special highway patrolling teams were deployed at major junctions along Srinagar’s major roads. The city was also closely guarded by security forces, with checkpoints and barricades built up at important places, and police and paramilitary forces held simulated drills in the city to ensure that they were ready for anything.

The entire population and Kashmiri leaders reacted and objected to the meeting, calling it a violation of the motherland and local traditions, and insulting the local people by imprisoning them in their homes, shutting down their businesses, and making them relevant for the meeting while they were the major stakeholder. The entire city was reduced to a ghost town after being invaded by security forces and aliens who claimed it as their birthright while depriving the people of the land of all fundamental human rights.

This meeting was in total defiance of the United Nations (UN) declared fundamental human rights and disregard for the mechanisms established to address human rights violations.

These rights include the right to life and not to be killed by the state or another person. The right to be free from torture, or subjected to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. The right to be free from slavery and not be held in slavery or servitude. The right not to be discriminated against because of one’s race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and to hold whatever ideas you want and to express those opinions without fear of repercussions. The right to free speech to express one’s beliefs and ideas, as well as to receive and impart information and ideas through any medium and regardless of borders. The right to peaceful assembly and association, which allows you to gather with others for any reason. The right to a fair trial entails the right to be believed innocent until proven guilty, as well as the right to a fair trial if accused of a crime. The right to privacy, which includes the right to privacy in your home, family, and communication, and the property right, which includes the right to own property and the right not to be deprived of it without due process of law.

The holding of this meeting was in total defiance of the United Nations (UN) declared fundamental human rights and disregard for the number of mechanisms the UN had established to address human rights violations in any country. It reflected the helplessness of the UN Human Rights Council, which is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights. Instead of examining the allegations of human rights violations and making recommendations to the UN and the Indian government, it sided with India and turned a blind eye to the enslavement of the entire IIOJ&K during the pre-and post-G20 events.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is the UN’s principal human rights office, mandated to provide technical assistance to governments and monitor human rights situations around the world and the Human Rights Council can appoint experts to investigate human rights violations in specific countries or thematic areas, but instead chose to remain oblivious to this violation of indigenous peoples’ dignity, privacy, and right to earn a living.

The International Criminal Court (ICC), the world’s first permanent international court with jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and aggression, decided to sleep over the crime committed by the Indian Security forces.

The UN is also empowered to impose sanctions on governments that violate human rights, such as travel bans, asset freezes, and arms embargoes, and to reprimand noncompliant governments through the use of its bully pulpit, but in reality, the UN has proven itself castrated and too feeble against India while taking prompt actions against other nations such as Iran, Syria, and North Korea.

When Kashmiri leadership across the board, including political parties, student organizations, civil society groups, and the entire Kashmiri population, rose and expressed their anger, indignation, and deep frustration for outright excluding them from the G-20 meeting held in the deeply troubled and disputed city of Srinagar, the United Nations and all International and regional human rights organizations conveniently decided to declare themselves deaf and dumb.

While expressing their concern, the Kashmiri leadership across the IIOJ&K described the G-20 meeting as a distraction from the real problems, termed it a failed attempt by India to use the meeting to legitimize its illegal and brutal role and to use blatant force to strangle the unfortunate population, the United Nation and International Community thought them as economically non-viable entities and ignored their just and rightful doubts and demands.

The convening of the G-20 conference in Srinagar was an act of provocation by India, and the protests were a manifestation and sign of the deep political divisions in Kashmir, as well as an opportunity for people to show their anger and displeasure. The protesters emphasized that the Kashmir issue is far from ended and the battle rages on, with no sign of a resolution in sight. India conveniently sparked the unproportional use of force to suppress Kashmiris’ lawful legal right to assemble and protest and resorted to the brazen overuse of tear gas and baton charges to disperse them, resulting in serious injuries to the protestors.

India cannot fool itself and the world community by staging such mock and failed attempts to legitimize its illegal and illegitimate rules on Jammu and Kashmir as this issue holds significant importance for the United Nations, India, Pakistan, the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the international community.

It is important for the UN as it considers it a dispute between India and Pakistan, which remains one of the oldest unresolved issues on its agenda. The UN has passed several resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, emphasizing the need for a peaceful resolution through dialogue and self-determination for the people of the region.

The United Nations has been involved in the Jammu and Kashmir dispute since the partition of India in 1947. The UN considers it a conflict between India and Pakistan, and it is one of the organization’s longest unsolved disputes. The United Nations has issued multiple resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir, underlining the importance of a peaceful resolution through dialogue and self-determination for the region’s people. The United Nations is interested in fostering peace, stability, and the right of all states and peoples to self-determination.

India incorrectly and illegally considers the territory as an internal matter, based on the extremely contentious, contaminated, and shrouded-in-mystery accession of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir to India in 1947 by the Sikh Ruler, against the wishes and aspirations of the IIOJ&K people. India, albeit unsuccessfully, constructs its sovereignty and regards any external meddling or interference as unwarranted.

Pakistan asserts, and rightfully so, that IIOJ&K is a disputed area, and has been campaigning for the people of the region’s right to self-determination. Pakistan contends that the region’s majority-Muslim population should be able to decide their political future through a plebiscite, as guaranteed by UN resolutions.

The prolonged conflict has had a direct impact on the people of Jammu and Kashmir as they have been suffering politically, socially and economically. The dispute directly affects their lives, rights, and hopes for a peaceful and successful future.

The entire world community recognizes that resolving the IIOJ&K dispute is critical for regional and international peace and to assure stability, prevent nuclear conflict, combat cross-border terrorism, uphold human rights, build diplomatic relations, and sustain overall global peace and security. It believes that the resolution of the dispute would serve to lessen tensions, minimize the possibility of military conflict, and contribute to South Asian regional stability. It also believes that it is a nuclear flashpoint since any escalation of the Kashmir conflict might have disastrous effects, whereas a peaceful resolution of the issue would lessen the risk of nuclear conflict and contribute to regional nuclear non-proliferation efforts.

Although, by all accounts, India’s attempt to distract international attention away from the disputed region of IIOJ&K failed terribly, India is portraying the 3rd G-20 Tourism Working Group Meeting as a huge success. According to Indian official sources, the meeting, which was attended by representatives from 19 G20 member countries and the European Union, ended successfully with the adoption of a G20 tourism declaration highlighting the importance of tourism for economic growth and job creation and making a number of commitments such as investing in tourism infrastructure and promoting sustainable tourism practices, developing human resources in the tourism sector, and promoting tourism. It further claimed that the summit drew a big number of delegates not just from G20 countries but also from international organizations.

Pakistan’s natural and expected reaction was to aggressively and forcefully oppose the conference, citing its firm opposition “to holding any kind of G20 meetings in disputed territory.” Many countries either did not attend or sent low-key delegations. Mehbooba Mufti claimed India had turned the region into the equivalent of the Guantánamo Bay prison simply to hold a tourism meeting. Fernand de Varennes, the UN’s special rapporteur on minority issues, described the meeting as “unwittingly providing a veneer of support to a facade of normalcy” at a time when human rights violations, political persecution, and illegal arrests were on the rise.

Pakistan’s reaction though was natural and forceful, but words alone will not suffice. An appropriate response could be to hold an equally important and high-level conference in Azad Jammu and Kashmir to project Pakistan’s point of view and to represent the aspirations, demands, and wishes of the Kashmiri people which is to hold a plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations to grant the Kashmiris their inalienable right to self-determination.

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