**Is the Kashmir imbroglio nearing a solution?**

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Kashmir Solidarity Day is observed by Kashmiris and Pakistanis all over the world on 5 February each year since 1991 to express support and unity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and to pay homage to the Kashmiris martyred in the conflict. Every year solidarity rallies are held in Pakistan and by the Kashmiri Diaspora around the world.

The question arises, whether it is a futile exercise or fresh ground realities have brought the protagonists closer to finding a solution to the Kashmir imbroglio? A number of recent events depict light at the end of the dark tunnel.

On 5 August 2019, Narendra Modi’s extremist government, remaining oblivious to the United Nations Security Council recognizing Kashmir as a disputed territory, rescinded Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution, and illegally annexed Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh into the Indian Union. Since then, IIOJK has been in a state of lockdown while Modi’s fascist regime is wreaking havoc on the lives of ordinary Kashmiris. Pakistan’s frantic pleas to draw world attention towards the prolonged atrocities being committed on the Kashmiris and the brewing angst and anguish of the hapless victims have so far fallen on deaf ears.

What makes this year special? Why should a world desperately combating the global pandemic COVID-19, stop and listen to the frantic cries of help of the Kashmiris, when the Palestinians, Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar and numerous other minorities seeking the attention of the UN or the global human rights activists to intervene on their behalf go unheard.

It is true that the oppressed humanity, the world over, is asking for intervention and an end to its suffering but some factors that support an early solution to the Kashmir issue, merit attention. Firstly, as Ghulam Nabi Fai, the secretary-general of the US-based World Kashmir Awareness Forum, in his recent opinion piece titled ‘Indian people deserve warm felicitation’ published on occasion of India’s Republic Day 2021, pointed out that the Kashmir question is one of the oldest unresolved international problems pending on the agenda of the UN Security Council. The Kashmir issue prevails in what is recognized – under international law – as a disputed territory. According to the international agreements between India and Pakistan, negotiated by the UN and endorsed by the Security Council, the territory’s status is to be determined by the free vote of its people under UN supervision.

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Kashmir is the only international dispute in which a solution to the conflict – the right to self-determination – was suggested by the parties themselves, India and Pakistan. Mahatma Gandhi had declared: “If the people of Kashmir are in favor of opting for Pakistan, no power on earth can stop them from doing so. But they should be left free to decide for themselves.”

The most dangerous aspect of the entanglement in Kashmir is that the disputed territory shares its borders with three nuclear powers of the world – India, Pakistan, and China. Kashmir has been a flashpoint between India and Pakistan ever since the hostile neighbours came out of the nuclear closet in 1998 but Indian unilateral move to annex Ladakh on 5 August 2019, was much to the chagrin of China too, which has moved its troops closer to the Line of Actual Control. Indian troop’s adventurism in the region was met with stiff resistance by China and numerous Indian soldiers were badly thrashed although no firearms were used. This has raised the potential of an armed conflict with India facing two nuclear weapons armed states much closer to reality.

If the international community, especially the new political dispensation in Washington DC and change of guard at Berlin, Rome and some other capitals of the world fails to take cognizance of the boiling lava in Kashmir, it will be to the peril of not only the region but the entire world.

It is heartening that Amnesty International (AI) has issued a report about mass blinding of Kashmiris with pellet guns used by Indian occupational forces while the heinous crime of committing mass rapes as a tool of genocide in IIOJK has been stressed. AI has also brought to light the discovery of around 9,000 of mass graves in IIOJK which were all of indigenous Kashmiris who had been brutally massacred by the oppressive Indian regime following its occupation policy of Kashmir.

The startling exposé by the EU DisinfoLab has revealed a network of fake media and NGOs created by India to mislead the world opinion, especially pertaining to IIOJK for the last fifteen years. The first hearing in the EU about DisinfoLab was held in January 2021. The European Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU, including Disinformation (INGE) held a hearing on disinformation activities and tactics originating from India at the European Parliament, Brussels. Executive Director of EU Disinfolab Alexander Alaphalippe and Managing Director Gary Machado briefed the Committee on India’s disinformation campaign “Indian Chronicles.”

WhatsApp leak scandal of Indian TV anchor-person Arnab Goswami confirming that the 14 February 2019 Pulwama “terror attack” was India’s false flag operations against Pakistan has already raised eyebrows.

Under the circumstances, the time is ripe to bring international pressure on India to abide by the UN Security Council Resolutions on Kashmir and bring it to the negotiations table to reach a solution to the long pending Kashmir issue.

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