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USA TODAY, September 7, 2019

If the World Doesn't Intervene to stop the Brutality in Kashmir, All Will Suffer

Riffat Hassan

A million Indian soldiers have made Kashmir, the only Muslim majority state under Indian control, the largest prison in the world.

More attention being paid to the illegal annexation of Kashmir by India is very timely. It is critically important to let our community know about the unspeakable atrocities being committed in Kashmir by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-supported government of Narendra Modi.

In August 1947, when the subcontinent became free from British colonialism, it was partitioned into India and Pakistan, on the basis of religion. The Hindu-majority states became part of India, while the Muslim-majority states became part of Pakistan. Kashmir was a Muslim-majority state, but its Hindu ruler, Maharajah Hari Singh, initially opted to remain independent.

However, in October 1947 he signed the Instrument of Accession, whereby the state of Kashmir joined India while maintaining its autonomy except in the areas of foreign affairs, defense and communications. The special status of Kashmir was protected by Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

Pakistan disputed India's right to control Kashmir, and the matter was taken to the United Nations. According to Security Council resolutions, the future of Kashmir was to be determined by its people through plebiscite, giving them the right to join either India or Pakistan, or remain independent. The Indian government did not agree to holding a plebiscite, and its rule over Kashmir became more and more authoritarian, especially recently under Modi.

A Land and Power Grab

A month ago, Modi revoked Article 370 and made Kashmir a part of India. He also abrogated Article 35A, which empowered Kashmir's state legislature to define "permanent residents" of the state and gave them special rights and privileges. The primary purpose of removing Article 35A from the Indian Constitution is to change the demography of Kashmir from a Muslim-majority state to a Hindu-majority state.



A Kashmiri man walks as Indian paramilitary soldiers stand guard during security lockdown in Srinagar on Aug. 14, 2019. (Photo: Dar Yasin/AP)

India's unilateral action is in gross violation of the Security Council resolutions and international law. This action, along with India's repeated armed violations of the Line of Control between Pakistan and India, has brought two nuclear-armed neighboring countries to the brink of war. This extremely dangerous situation calls for the immediate attention of the global community to arbitrate in the matter.

To understand the gravity of the situation it is important to know that Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an extremist, right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary organization, is the parent of India's ruling party BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). Its goal is to make India a Hindutva country based on the belief that high-caste Hindus are a superior race.

It espouses a special hatred of Muslims, past rulers of India, and supports ethnic cleansing as was demonstrated by the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002, when Modi was the chief minister of this state. Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a member and hero of the RSS, for being soft on Muslims.

What is of the greatest concern today is the fact that Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority state under Indian control, has been under curfew. Its communications with the outside world has been cut off completely. One million Indian soldiers have made Kashmir the largest prison in the world.

Aside from the dreadful violence being perpetrated against Kashmiris, there is an acute shortage of food and medicines. Women have been raped and children have been blinded by pellet guns over the years.

The dreadful treatment of Dalits, Muslims, Christians and other minorities by Modi's government is being protested strongly by Indian social justice advocates, who are themselves victimized by the regime. If Modi's extremist actions are not checked by the world community, the results are bound to be cataclysmic, impacting not only Kashmir and Pakistan but the whole planet.

Riffat Hassan is a University of Louisville Professor Emerita and founder of The Salaam Network. This column originally appeared in the Louisville (Kentucky) Courier Journal. You can read diverse opinions from our Board of Contributors and other writers on the Opinion front page, on Twitter @usatodayopinion and in our daily Opinion newsletter. To respond to a column, submit a comment to letters@usatoday.com.