

**PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN KASHMIR**

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Chairman Burton, members of the Subcommittee, I greatly appreciate your invitation to testify here today. I have studied Kashmir for 53 years, first as a journalist resident in South Asia for the Associated Press and the Washington Post and later as a Senior Associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace for 22 years and as a Senior Scholar of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. I am currently a Senior Scholar of the Wilson Center and Director of the Asia Program of the Center for International Policy in Washington. I am the author of five books on South Asia and of numerous articles on Kashmir.

Never before in the half century I have studied India and Pakistan has there been a more promising opportunity for peace in South Asia and for the reduction of tensions in Kashmir. The people of Kashmir are trapped in the crossfire between India and Pakistan. War inevitably breeds human rights abuses, as we ourselves learned in Vietnam and as we are now re-learning in Iraq. The only way to end the human rights abuses that have been committed by both India and Pakistan in Kashmir is to move the peace process forward.

I'm going to begin by underlining the hard reality that both India and Pakistan have been guilty of human rights abuses in Kashmir. We won't help the people of Kashmir if all we do today is engage in India-bashing or Pakistan-bashing. Against that background, I'm going to suggest what both sides can do to reduce tensions and end human rights abuses. Finally I will focus on what the United States can do to promote the peace process.

The insurgency in Kashmir began in 1987 after India interfered in the state elections. Pakistan under General Zia ul Haq saw a golden opportunity to destabilize Kashmir and began to support the Kashmir insurgency.

Pakistan was at that time awash with American weapons and money provided for the Afghan struggle against the Russians in Afghanistan. The Interservices Intelligence (ISI) in Pakistan began to use those weapons and that money as well as U.S.-trained Islamic fundamentalist Afghan resistance fighters to escalate the insurgency in Kashmir. Elements allied with al-Qaeda were among the foreign fighters who poured into Kashmir to help the Kashmiri insurgents. Gradually the Kashmiri fighters have lost the leadership of the fighting in Kashmir to Pakistani, Afghan and other fighters orchestrated by the ISI. India has overreacted in much the same way as the U.S. in Vietnam and the Russians in Afghanistan by building up an inflated military force in Kashmir that has committed many well-documented atrocities.

Among the worst human rights abuses committed by Pakistani-sponsored Islamic militant groups in Kashmir has been the ethnic cleansing of Kashmir Hindus. Ninety five percent of the Hindus in the Kashmir Valley have been driven to seek refuge in Jammu and New Delhi, as the 2001 State Department Human Rights Report confirms.

Pakistan has systematically attempted to undermine or assassinate moderate Kashmiri leaders who have favored a ceasefire with India and participation in state elections. The principal insurgent group consisting mainly of Kashmiris is the Hizbul Mujahidin. Like all of the insurgent groups, it has relied on Pakistani aid. In July, 2000, Hizbul Mujahidin offered to conclude a ceasefire but within days the ISI pulled the reins and Hizbul was forced to renege on its offer. In 2002, when preparations for state

elections were underway, a prominent Kashmiri moderate who advocated participation in the elections, Abdul Ghani Lone, was assassinated by groups linked closely with ISI. During the elections and as recently as a month ago, Mahbooba Mufti, a leading moderate, has been the target of ISI- sponsored assassination attempts.

Despite the atmosphere of fear promoted by Pakistan, 22 of the 27 leaders of the Hurriyat, a grouping of insurgent leaders, has engaged in talks with Indian Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani on January 20 and March 27. Another round will be held in June.

The principal grievances expressed by the Kashmiris in those talks have been the lack of accountability concerning the identity of Indian-held Kashmiri political prisoners; the release of political prisoners; ending the execution of political prisoners, and the need for a review of political prisoners. India has promised action on these grievances but has yet to deliver. Prompt action is an essential precondition for the June talks to make progress.

Prompt action by Pakistan to encourage its surrogate groups to negotiate a ceasefire in Kashmir is also essential to defuse the climate that leads to human rights abuses. Above all, Pakistan must terminate ISI sponsorship of the insurgency and dismantle its infrastructure for the support of cross-border infiltration by Islamic extremist groups, or the peace process will soon break down.

Pakistan's intentions have not yet been tested because the snows in the Himalayas prevent significant cross-border infiltration. The test will be what happens when the snows melt. Meanwhile, Pakistan could make an important contribution to the peace process by agreeing to negotiate on opening a bus route between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad that would link the Indian and Pakistani held areas of Kashmir. This bus

route, proposed by India last fall, would open up trade channels and greatly contribute to tension reduction.

What can the United States do? President Bush promised General Pervez Musharraf \$3 billion in economic and military aid at Camp David. This aid should clearly be conditioned on Pakistan's termination of support for the Kashmiri insurgency. Second, the United States should encourage World Bank and Asian Development Bank aid for key economic development programs in Kashmir. A U.S. Institute for Peace report by Wahid Habibullah points to reforestation, water development and industrial investment as key areas for aid that would help to defuse tensions. Finally, at the political level, the U.S. should make clear that it views the line of control as the eventual international boundary in Kashmir. This is necessary to make clear to Pakistan that there is no hope for internationalizing the dispute. As long as that hope remains alive in Pakistan, the Islamic extremist forces in Pakistan will push General Musharraf, or the general who succeeds him, to keep the pot boiling in Kashmir --- and that would mean a never-ending human rights tragedy. Thank you.