



General Assembly

Distr.: General
17 February 2021

English only

Human Rights Council

Forty-sixth session

22 February–19 March 2021

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by World Muslim Congress, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 January 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Right to Education: Impact of conflict on education in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir

The fourth global sustainable development goal is to achieve education and provide opportunities equally to everyone regardless of their country, ethnicity, color or region. The significance of education could be evident by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as it mentions in Article 26, (1), “Everyone has the right to education.”

Despite this, the children of Indian administered Kashmir are still striving for their right of education. The continued violence and bloodshed in the region have rendered the education system completely paralyzed. Frequent shutdowns, long term curfews, arbitrary detentions, killings, vandalizations and crackdowns have led to the closure of schools. According to a survey over 3000 adult and non-formal education centres were closed in the region since 1990 due to financial constraints and staff shortages. It has been observed that the children who were born after 1990 have spent less time in schools and more time in homes owing to persistent violence and uncertainty.

Other than that, numerous schools were under Indian military occupation. They had also constructed their military camps near schools to install fear and insecurity among parents and children. These kinds of harsh strategies led children to experience trauma, stress, anxiety and trauma. The trauma of having no future opportunities in the region, the stress of being killed or arrested on the way to schools, the depression of facing horrendous incidents in front of their eyes. Such thick presence of military troops residing around schools plants the dreadful conditions for children such as sexual violence, abuse and other sorts of harassment. Unfortunately, girls are more vulnerable to the adverse consequences of the militarization of educational spaces. As a result, there has been an increase in the dropout rate among school going children, particularly girls.

Analysing the enrolment data research conducted by two young scholars shows how the access of children was limited to education and how many children have been pulled out from school after the 1990s in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The enrolment in the schools reduced between 1989 and 1990 by almost 2.9% (from 1.69 lac to 1.64 lac). According to a survey, a total of almost 17% of school buildings were lost in the state of Jammu and Kashmir due to either being targeted/ burnt or occupied by Indian security forces. The destruction of educational infrastructure represents one of the greatest developmental setbacks for the students affected by the conflict.

2019 proved to be the darkest year for Kashmiri students as the education sector suffered the most due to the endless and indefinite military lockdown that was installed soon after the Indian government unilaterally stripped off the article 370 and Article 35 A of the Indian constitution on August 5th, 2019. Educational institutions remained shut for nearly a year raising warnings from educators about the mental health toll on students whose lives have been repeatedly disrupted. The closure had hit the academic session to the extent that it caused an irreversible loss of study and tuition to students.

Kashmiri students, researchers and teachers faced one of the longest internet shutdowns in the world, which remained for almost six months and then partially removed by the restoration of 2G internet services, which could barely hold the minimum internet communication. On one hand, where students from all over the world are attending online classes, arranged by their academic institutions, amidst COVID-19 lockdown, the Kashmiri students were deprived of going to school or attend any kind of online working since August 2019 lockdown. The parents and children are frustrated and angry because they have not access to their basic right of education. In case if their institutions are arranging online classes, they would not be able to learn from them too, because of the continuous internet blockade. When Indian government claims to provide internet facilities in Indian administered Kashmir, they mean 2G connection, which is absolutely of no use as online classes do not work on 2G and they are unable to download study material. They are urging the government to restore the high speed internet, so they could have access to their virtual classes. According to health experts, the frequent disruptions in formal schooling, limited

opportunities to socialize and erratic schedules have led to a rise in depression and behavioural issues among children.

A Kashmiri young student preparing for the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) said, “On 5 August, when the Government of India imprisoned the Kashmiris on the strength of the army and guns, removing Article 370 from the State of Jammu and Kashmir and dividing the state into two union territories, I was in Delhi. I was sick in a hospital and I had no contact with my home till 20 August. On 21 August, Abba called from a government office in Kashmir. It was a 40 seconds long call. There are many Kashmiri students in Delhi who were preparing for UPSC. May have gone back and those who have not gone, they are unable to concentrate properly in studies due to mental stress.”

Schools in Indian administered Kashmir are technically open, but no children are going to school. The teachers mark attendance for a couple of hours a day, sometimes 2-3 times a week. Rural schools are shut. Schools have largely remained closed throughout the days of the lockdown and there has been an intense climate of fear. Together all of these factors have contributed to a serious and sustained loss to the education of millions of children in the Valley and therefore has put their individual and collective futures at stake. The decades-long conflict in the state has had its children among the worst victims. With erratic and uncertain schooling, the ambience of fear and conflict and a precarious relationship to normalcy of life, the instability of the Valley has taken a toll on the children living here.

An international organization called Relief International tells us that while the number of children who take admissions to schools in the Valley have gone up, there has been a steady growth in the impact of military conflicts on these schools too. Declining teacher accountability, low attendance rates and the fear amongst parents about sending their wards to school has made the process of schooling irregular and erratic in the state. Repeated school shutdowns and decline in the quality of education are rampant in the Valley. Children of the Valley are exposed to violence, fear, trauma and perpetually lead their lives in an ambience of uncertainty, it is natural that the crisis of mental health would be one of the biggest challenges in such times.

Apart from the militarization of the Valley and the suspension of day to day life, the education system in Indian administered Kashmir has experienced one of the greatest declines. Although everyone suffers a great deal and violence proves destructive for all, it is the children of Kashmir who stand to suffer the most.

A six year old girl in Soura Srinagar said she was scared to go to school because “police uncle goli mareng” (Police uncle would shoot me). World Muslim Congress requests the national and international authorities to hear the voices of students of the Indian administered Kashmir, who are in dire need to be heard.

Relief International, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.