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

Written statement* submitted by Africa Culture Internationale, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

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

[22 August 2022]

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



The Crisis in the Azad Kashmir, Pakistan Administered Kashmir

We want to take this opportunity to speak on the behalf of the people of the Azad Kashmir, Pakistan Administered Kashmir, the part of the disputed Kashmiri territory that the Pakistani state claims to be independent. Almost seventy-five years have passed since Pakistan illegally took control over this part of Jammu and Kashmir. The nomenclatures of a parliamentary style set up, Presidential and Prime Ministerial positions appeared to convince us that freedom had been offered to us in true letter and spirit. With time, the intrusive role of the Pakistani Army and the civilian dispensations would prove that basic governance and basic rights remain a distant dream for us. Throughout these seventy five years, our entire worldview has been distorted by the Pakistani state through narratives of violence, revenge and retribution for the larger Kashmir cause.

Since the beginning of Pakistan-sponsored armed conflict in the Jammu and Kashmir, the people of the Azad Kashmir, Pakistan Administered Kashmir have been pushed onto the frontlines as cannon fodder in India-Pakistan rivalry over Kashmir. There is no single instance in history where the people of the region were consulted for Kashmir related issues, despite being the main stakeholders in the dispute.

In the last three decades, the clerical establishment of Pakistan has found a big constituency by exploiting the sentiments of the deprived people of Azad Kashmir, Pakistan Administered Kashmir. They have been used in Pakistan-sponsored anti-India terror activities, without any accountability or regard for their human rights. The broader religious narratives were successfully used as distracting tactics in order to concentrate all the decision-making powers in the hands of civilian and military leadership of Pakistan. Today, Pakistan Administered Kashmir lacks educational or social infrastructure, and these backward indicators have forced substantial outmigration of the people from Azad Kashmir, Pakistan Administered Kashmir into foreign countries making the region dependent on remittances. The problems do not end here, since Azad Kashmir, Pakistan Administered Kashmir diaspora remains the primary target of the Pakistani intelligence agencies for their propaganda activities. Every year, millions on dollars are wasted in mobilizing the diaspora members across the world for anti-India rallies.

The crisis in Pakistan Administered Kashmir has taken a massive toll on women too. Thousands of women are either mothers, daughters, wives or sisters of the young men who were brainwashed to die in the Indian Administered Kashmir in the name of Jihad. It is known to the world how terrorist outfits operating in connivance with the Pakistani security agencies maintain year-round presence to recruit poor and gullible youth to fill their training camps. A number of Kashmiri women had crossed into Azad Kashmir, Pakistan Administered Kashmir as their husbands were made to fight in the Kashmir valley. No soon after these men lost their lives, these women were abandoned by the government and the terrorist agencies that recruited those men. Further, the patriarchal setup and the pressure of societal honour prevent these women from voicing these concerns in the public domain. However, many widows have come out and spoken against these oppressions.

In the last few years, Azad Kashmir, Pakistan Administered Kashmir has also emerged as a hotbed of anti-women crimes and the authorities have avoided taking action against the growing menace. We were still coming to terms with the gruesome rape case of M.T. (from Bhimber), and the region once again woke up to the murder of a young girl K.M.. In December 2021, the body of the thirteen year old K.M. was recovered almost four weeks after she went missing in Dadyal in Pakistan Administered Kashmir. The girl had been raped and beheaded. Due to growing social media outreach, the people of the region were able to take cognizance and protest against the negligence of the authorities. There are so many case similar to that of M.T. and K.M. which are yet to be known in the public domain. Powerful sections affiliated with the government, clerical establishment and feudal interests have always tried to suppress any reporting on atrocities against women.

Our intention for mentioning these incidents is to bring the international community's notice towards the multidimensional nature of oppression we face in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan Administered Kashmir, firstly as disenfranchised people and secondly as women. sincerely

hope that the Human Rights Council and the international community shall look into our concerns and use the respective good offices to attend them.
