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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 International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM), a non-governmental organization on the roster

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

[31 May 2021]

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



Human Rights Abuses Persist in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir

Indian authorities continue to impose harsh and discriminatory restrictions in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir (IAJ&K). The Indian government's unwarranted restraints on the rights to free speech, access to information, health care, and education have been intensified by the Covid-19 pandemic.

There have been several new arrests, torture, and ill-treatment and extra judicial killings by the Indian military & para-military forces. The Kashmiri leadership including Asiya Andrabi, Shabir Shah, Farooq A Dar, M. Yasin Malik, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, and many more either detained in Indian prisons or at their houses. The authorities have also used harsh counterterrorism and sedition laws to clamp down on peaceful critics.

In April, the police opened criminal investigations against Gowher Geelani and Peerzada Ashiq, both journalists, and Masrat Zahra, a photojournalist, contending that their social media posts or reporting were "anti-national." On 31 July 2020 editor Qazi Shibli, previously held under the Public Safety Act, was questioned and detained. Organisation of Kashmir Coalition (OKC) issued an "Urgent Action" on him.

In June, the authorities announced a new media policy which empowers them to decide what is "fake news, plagiarism and unethical or anti-national activities" and to take punitive action against media outlets, journalists, and editors.

The crackdown (and the lockdown) adversely affected livelihoods of all people in IAJ&K, particularly in the tourism-dependent Kashmir Valley. The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries estimated that this cost the economy over US \$6.4 billion, for which no redress has been provided. Losses have nearly doubled since the authorities imposed further restrictions to contain the Covid-19 pandemic in March.

The pandemic has made access to the internet crucial for information, communication, education, and business. However, the Indian authorities have only barely complied with its own Supreme Court orders in January to treat access to the internet as a fundamental right, permitting only slow-speed 2G mobile internet services. Doctors have complained that the lack of internet was hurting the Covid-19 response. "It is a new virus – research, studies, guidelines and updates are changing every other day," said one doctor. "The internet helps doctors to keep a tab on developments around the world, but we cannot access video lectures or other information in the absence of high-speed internet."

Without proper internet, students are often unable to attend online classes. "The impact on education has been particularly severe," the Human Rights Forum for Jammu and Kashmir noted in its report on human rights violations since August 2019, saying that since the lockdown, "The limiting of networks to 2G has made it impossible for online classes to function adequately. Graduate students and teachers have been unable to participate in conferences or have their papers published, causing willful harm to their careers and violating the rights to education."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has repeatedly voiced concern about human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir.