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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 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.

[17 May 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Violence Against Women

In Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir, women are at the intersection of different identities and each of these brings new challenges to women every day. All women in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir navigate through the challenges thrown at them by conflict in innumerable ways. Similarly, the class and caste positions also put hurdles in their way to living fulfilled lives. A majority of women in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir are Muslim, which is in itself a challenge in times of global Islamophobia.

In Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir, women face many stigmas and challenges. These are both private as well as political. The women in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir are both victims and survivors. They are widows who have lost husbands and sons, or pregnant women unable to reach crucial health services due to the restrictions imposed on them.

The region has seen decades of conflict, militarization, protests, and violent crackdowns. Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir has essentially been on lockdown since August 2019, when India scrapped the region's semi-autonomous status, bringing the former state of Jammu and Kashmir under the direct control of the central government. Authorities imposed a communications blockade and security forces patrolled the streets, shut down public transportation, and closed markets.

A four-member team from Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression (WSS), which visited Kashmir from September 23-28, 2019 released an alarming report about the conditions in the Valley.

According to the team members, they said they have heard the armed forces speaking derogatorily about Kashmiri women. "The forces also threatened women giving the example of the alleged mass rapes of Kunan Proshpora in 1991. The women are living under a constant threat of molestation and abuse,"

Recent reports by the UN and other agencies indicate that Indian forces in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir often target women to demoralize its people who are demanding an end to the Indian occupation.

They don't only suffer from intense humiliation and harassment but also undergo traumatic experiences with prolonged depression making them mentally sick. However the disturbing situation prevalent in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir has hit the Kashmiri women hardest. Thousands of women who have become widows have to bear the entire responsibility of bringing up their children and running the household expenditure or the half-widows of Kashmir (husbands disappeared/taken away by security forces or militants) leading a dignified life can become a real challenge.

In a typical Kashmiri society, women's identity is intertwined with their husband's once a woman is married off, she becomes the man's responsibility. Thus, many of these women (half-widows) and their children get into a survival crisis with no source of income. the huge presence of Indian troops who are perceived as an occupational force by the locals creates apprehensions amongst the women and their families, leading to restricted movement of women in public spaces. It has in due course, also resulted in the excessive control of women and their bodies.

In Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir, since 1990 approximately 10,000 women have been raped and Indian authorities have not prosecuted any single offender and they are even reluctant to condemn these shameful acts. The deepest sorrow is that nobody is prepared to raise this issue. In Kashmir, since 1990, 20,000 women have been widowed and many of the daughters of Kashmir are living lives as a 'half widows' and they haven't got a clue about their husbands, whether they are dead or illegally detained by the Indian forces. You can only imagine the figure by the fact that only in Baramullah district; approx. 1500 women are searching for their missing husbands. This very fact is hard to digest why the women's rights activists, human rights heroes, and international organizations have criminal silent on this issue.

The social stigma attached to these women adds to their miseries.

The horrors of women who suffer in the absence of their husbands are often left unnoticed. The untold and unheard story of Kashmir's half-widows — the brave women carrying on despite all odds, exposes us to the indispensable role of women and their thankless contribution towards realizing a better future for the generations to come. These women are among the torch bearers of Kashmir's freedom struggle. Their resilience is unmatched and their struggles unrivaled.

Though the International humanitarian law prohibits attacks on civilian populations, such, is at times systematically ignored and human rights are often violated in connection with situations of armed conflict, affecting the civilian population, especially women.

The Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 1949, and the Additional Protocols of 1977 24/ provide that women shall especially be protected against any attack on their honor, in particular against humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution or any form of indecent assault. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, states that "violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law".

Beijing Declaration about women in conflict also calls to integrate a gender perspective in the resolution of armed or other conflicts and foreign occupation and aims for gender balance when nominating or promoting candidates for judicial and other positions in all relevant international bodies

The Women in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir have suffered, due to the decades of conflict, we appeal to the United Nations Secretary-General – the custodian of human rights – to provide the leadership in protecting the Women's rights in Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir.
