

PRESS RELEASE

Webinar Crisis in Jammu and Kashmir – *Youm e Istehsal* 05 August 2020
by Consulate General of Pakistan, Houston

HOUSTON: Ambassador Dr. Asad Majeed Khan participated in a webinar on the crisis in Illegally Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IloJK) organized by the Consulate General of Pakistan in Houston and Friends of Kashmir, Dallas to mark *Youm e Istehsal* on 05 August 2020.

President Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Members of US Congress, Texas State assembly, British parliament, Senate of Pakistan, civil society representatives, Kashmiri leaders in diaspora, Journalists, and activists attended the webinar.

In his welcoming remarks, Consul General Abrar H Hashmi thanked the participants. He said that *Youm-e-Istehsal* (05 August 2020) marks one year since India's illegal action and it was to express solidarity with and highlight the plight of the people of IloJK.

In his keynote address, President of AJ&K, Sardar Masood Khan gave details of the ongoing military siege of apocalyptic gravity wherein people of IloJK are colonized and risk total annihilation. He highlighted how people's liberties, human dignity, and identity were being ruined. Kashmiris are terrorized by 900,000 troops using force, especially against youth to break their will. Kashmiris are prisoners within their lands, homes, and hearths and India took a cover of COVID-19 to introduce new domicile laws and importing Indians to change the demographic composition. The people of IloJK have no representation and are at the mercy of the fascist BJP-RSS regime led by Narendra Modi in New Delhi. He said the United States has been a source of strength for Kashmiris. The President called upon its leaders and people to play their leading role in resolving the dispute through United Nations resolution or under chapter six to vacate illegal Indian occupation.

Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (Democrat- Houston, Texas), who is a recipient of *Hilal e Pakistan* and President of US-Pakistan congressional caucus and co-chair of Friends of Kashmir, reiterated her support for human rights, peace and security. She said we let people of Kashmir know we stand with people of Jammu and Kashmir. And promised she will continue raising her voice for the rights of oppressed people worldwide.

Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (Democrat - Dallas, Texas) was emphatically supported the right to self-determination of the Kashmiris. She recalled about co-sponsoring resolution HR-745 which condemned Indian actions in J&K and communication blockade and called for the restoration of normalcy. She assured continued strong support so that life is spent in freedom.

Congressman Jim Banks (Republican – Indiana), is a co-chair of Friends of Kashmir, and is a staunch supporter of civil and economic liberties. He pointed out that bipartisan efforts his caucus was able to draw the attention of the United States' leadership. He too committed to continuing working to make the congressional colleagues aware of the situation in Kashmir and ease their sufferings.

Ms. Riffat Wani, from Srinagar IIOJK, raised serious concerns over the ongoing humanitarian crisis and particularly for women. She said women were the worse victims of Indian occupation forces who use rape as a weapon of war. She mentioned that whole villages and localities were victimized in the darkness of nights. Besides, women as mothers, wives, and daughters suffer in hospitals, and at homes waiting for their loved ones who forcibly disappeared. Hundreds are half-widows and orphan living under anxiety. This machination is used to deter the local population from pursuing their just struggle for *Azadi*.

Ms. Terry Meza, Member Texas State Assembly from Dallas was empathic in her support for peace, religious freedoms, and the right to self-determination. She emphasized the need for easing restrictions and ensuring liberties for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. She also mentioned her interactions and enhanced understanding of the issue and wanted the US Administration to attend to the issue on merits and not just political considerations.

Lord Nazir Ahmed, Member House of Lords of UK, and Senator Shaheen Butt from Islamabad also joined the webinar. Mr. Hafeez Khan, a businessman from Dallas, Dr. Rao Kamran Ali, President PAK PAC, Mr. Abid Malik, President, Pakistan Society of Northern Texas, Mr. Abdul Hameed Lone of Hurriyat Conference, Mr. Mubashir Warraich, journalist and other speakers dispelled the notion that Kashmir issue was internal to India. They said the international community should play its role to end human sufferings in IIOJK by raising it with their political leadership. The speakers expressed serious concerns over continued internet and media blackout and that it impacts every human activity. The speakers also condemned the new Domicile and land acquisition laws in IIOJK and warned about the consequences of forced demographic change in the occupied territory.

Ambassador Dr. Asad M Khan, wrapping up the discussion, highlighted the catastrophic human tragedy and severe impacts of 'double lockdown' - the communication, and media blackout and COVID-19 related closures. He said Kashmir was not internal to India, it has promised to the international community at the United Nations, Pakistan and Kashmiris. Now it has reneged on all those promises. Kashmiris rejected the illegal action of India manifested in the fact that it had to impose curfew ahead of the 1st anniversary of 05 August 2020. Ambassador Khan warned that Pakistan's fears of demographic changes have come true with sleuths of new Indian laws akin to demographic apartheid. He reminded that Kashmir remains a flashpoint and it threatens peace & security and holding back the development of south Asia. Thousands of ceasefire violations on the Line of

Control not only endanger people's lives and property but could escalate. He assured Pakistan's continued support to the just cause of Kashmiris expressed and exhibited by the leadership and people today in unambiguous and categorical terms. He thanked the support of the USA Congress and the Administration for being the voice of voiceless Kashmiris. Ambassador Khan thanked the panelists for bringing their invaluable and varied perspectives to the fore, which certainly raised awareness.

The webinar was telecasted live on TVOne USA and facebook of Embassy of Pakistan Washington DC, and twitter handle of the Consulate General of Pakistan Houston where the number of participants also expressed their views on the humanitarian crisis in Iloilo.

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