

Pakistan: Left leaders blast Modi's "fascism" in Kashmir

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LAHORE: Leaders of Left parties, civil society and peace activists condemned the annexation of Kashmir by the Modi government, and warned that humanitarian crisis in Indian-held J&K can spiral into a dangerous conflict between India and Pakistan. They called upon the people of the South Asian region to foil the rising threat of Hindu fascism and other extremist and authoritarian forces.

Addressing the conference on freedom and peace, sponsored by South Asia Free Media Association (Safma) and supported by half a dozen Left parties and organizations, the speakers expressed their concern about the wider ramifications of Hindu communalism and fascism in India, which has endangered not only India's republican character as envisioned by Gandhi and Nehru but also posed a serious threat to peace and security of the region.

Expressing their support for the cause of the Kashmiri people for their right to self-determination, they condemned unconstitutional and arbitrary revocation of special status of Kashmir and turning J&K into a virtual colony. The conference called upon the international community to stop human rights violations in the occupied state.

The conference called upon the people of the region to work together for the rights of the oppressed people and against the forces of fascism, religious extremism and conflict. Those who addressed the conference included Imtiaz Alam, SAFMA, Farooq Tariq, AWP, Taimur Rehman, MKP, Asif Khan PPP, Hussain Naqi, HRCP, Saleema Hashmi, WAF, Irfan Mufti, SAP and other prominent intellectuals.

"Kashmir has become a jail for the seven million people living under curfew for the last 12 days. It is important to focus on the Kashmiris' rights," said Imtiaz Alam of Safma. "There is big reaction in India over oppression in Kashmir, read Indian columnists."

He underlined the need for exercising restraint and warned that it was important not to aggravate the situation at the LoC.

Saleema Hashmi, artist, educationist and intellectual, recited many verses by Faiz and said Faiz had predicted that Kashmir would be free one day but we don't know when. She wondered what would have happened to Faiz had he been alive at this time.

Saroop Ijaz pointed out that it was in 2014 when the BJP government announced a muscular approach towards Kashmir, and since then the BJP-RSS language went religious for the first time with no space for political dissent. Then followed impunity to security forces, mass graves and forced disappearances. The scene turned into BJP-RSS state vs the people of Kashmir and this appears to be a long, protracted conflict, he said.

"People in Indian occupied Kashmir do not have access to journalists and human rights organisations," Ijaz said. Irfan Mufti said, "Certain changes are being made in this region to provide India trade route to Afghanistan. There are many challenges to freedom and peace both for Pakistan

and India. FATF Asia Group is chaired by India and Pakistan is already in the grey list,” he pointed out. Farooq Tariq of Awami Workers Party (AWP) said, “The curfew has cut the people of Kashmir from the rest of the world. Nobody knows whether they are getting food and necessary supplies. Kashmir needs freedom from oppression, Kashmir needs to be independent.”

Hussain Naqi, veteran journalist and human rights champion who had recently been to Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, said India had revoked Article 370 which clearly was a violation of the right of the people of Kashmir.

The conference passed the following resolution:

1. Condemn the arbitrary and unconstitutional steps, including the scrapping of article 370, Article 35-A, annexation of J&K and its bifurcation, which is also against the UN Security Council resolutions and Shimla Accord and above all the aspirations of the Kashmiri people for AZADI.
2. Express our solidarity with the democratic and civil society forces of India in their struggle against the Communal and fascist designs of Hindutva and Modi government’s ultimate goal of turning Republic of India into a Hindu Rashtra. We are equally concerned about continuing violations of human and civil rights and censorship on media and rise of authoritarian and sectarian forces in Pakistan.
3. Caution against the dangerous consequent repercussions of Hindu communalism on Pakistan where extremist religious forces and outlawed terrorist outfits are quite eager to strike a comeback on the dangerous and counter-productive pretext of misconstrued ‘Jehad’.
4. Condemn all attacks on civil liberties, human rights, freedom of expression, independence of media and peoples peaceful struggles for their rights not only in Indian-held Kashmir, but also in Pakistan.
5. Demand lifting of curfew, blockade of communication and imprisonment of political activists in Kashmir. The restrictions on media, ongoing which-hunt of leaders of opposition and activists of people’s rights movements and plight of missing persons should be brought to an end in Pakistan as well.
6. Caution both the governments of India and Pakistan to avoid violation of ceasefire agreement on LoC and refrain from turning conflict in Indian annexed J&K into a limited or yet another full-scale Indo-Pak war which may bring the irreparable devastation of a nuclear winter to the subcontinent.
7. Appeal to the peoples of South Asia and the international community to stand up against the specter of war, possible nuclear holocaust, rising authoritarianism and repression of peoples’ rights.

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