

GLOBAL COMMUNITY MUST HOLD INDIA ACCOUNTABLE FOR WAR CRIMES, HR VIOLATIONS IN IOK



Sardar Masood Khan, President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, thanked the people of London and the United Kingdom for marking the Kashmir Solidarity Day with unprecedented passion, fervour and commitment this year.

He was speaking at a large gathering of British parliamentarians, councillors, professionals, human rights activists, and community leaders. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, addressed the conference as keynote speaker.

The event was hosted by Honourable Imran Hussain, Shadow Minister of Justice.

President Masood Khan thanked the UK Parliament and Government for rejecting and turning down India's demarches and objections to an international conference on Kashmir organized by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Pakistan in the House of Commons. He said: "The Indian occupation forces in Kashmir have smothered the voices of the Kashmiris in IOK. They have taken away their right to freedom

of expression. They have imposed a gag order in IOK. They wanted to extend that gag order to the British Parliament. But the United Kingdom said NO to India.” The President conveyed the gratitude of the people of IOK to the UK for its decisive and dismissive response to India.

The President said that the UK was itself preoccupied with Brexit and its repercussions, and yet it chose to give time to Kashmir for two consecutive days to express solidarity with the people of Indian Occupied Kashmir. First, an international conference was held. Second, robust and large demonstrations were held in Parliament Square and in front of 10 Downing Street. Third, a big event was being hosted by MP Imran Hussain which included an exhibition of pictures depicting human atrocities in IOK, also displaying the horrendous images of mass blindings of Kashmiris.

The President said that the people of Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir, as well as Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora communities living all around the world, were marking Kashmir Solidarity Day. This year, the day had truly become an International Kashmir Solidarity Day, he said. The day, he said, was marked all around the world - in Italy, Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, the Gulf Region, and the Asia-Pacific Region. This solidarity is in sharp contrast with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s frosty reception in Kashmir on February 3, with shuttered markets and empty streets. “The rejection of India’s illegal writ was total”, he said.

President Masood Khan said that that it was the resolve of the people of Jammu and Kashmir that they will, through their struggle, “break the chains and shackles of bondage, slavery and occupation” imposed on them by India. “Kashmiris have been striving for the last two

hundred years to get their freedom, first from the autocratic and oppressive Dogra dynasty and for the last 71 years from India's occupation. This is a nation where people opposing oppression and exploitation were flayed alive but they did not bow their heads in submission. This nation will get its right". He added: "Kashmir has been witnessing its own holocausts and pogroms; it is time now to end them for all times to come," he said.

President Masood Khan reiterated that Kashmiris will never "give up, capitulate or surrender."

He thanked the All-Party Parliamentary Kashmir Group for compiling and releasing a comprehensive report last October, which has made solid and substantive recommendations. He said that this report must be followed up for action by the British Government, the UN Secretary General and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. "The United Kingdom", the President said, "had a special responsibility because of its critical role as the permanent member of the UN Security Council".

Paying tribute to the redoubtable Kashmiri-Pakistani diaspora community in the UK for their efforts which were bearing fruit in awareness raising, the President appealed to them to intensify their campaign for the right to self-determination of Kashmir through letters, phone calls and meeting with the MPs and peers to create a firestorm of protest against the outrage in IOK.

The AJK President said that India must be held accountable for its crimes against humanity. Western countries, which are custodians of human rights, should break their eerie silence on Kashmir which is by far the worst human rights crisis in the world today. Awareness about Indian crimes had been established by independent and impartial investigations. Now, he said, it was for the international community to play its rightful role.

President Khan urged the international community, especially global citizens and civil society activists, to start a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement against India.

He also demanded that to meaningfully follow up on the High Commissioner for Human Rights' report on Kashmir, the Human Rights Council should appoint a Special Rapporteur on Kashmir and the UN Secretary General a Special Envoy on Kashmir.

Kashmiris, the President said, do not go to the international fora to beg for liberty and freedom, which they would attain through their own struggle. They, he said, appeal to the world community to remind it of its obligations because "an end to the egregious human rights violations in Kashmir is the responsibility of the entire humanity."

He also thanked Pakistan for its steadfast support to the people of Kashmir despite myriad existential challenges it has faced.

The President said that the people of Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir believe that Kashmir cannot be resolved militarily or through India's state terrorism, as India believes; it can only be resolved through political and diplomatic means. The people of Pakistan and Kashmiris are ready for any solution that has the explicit consent of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who are key party to the dispute.

Talking to a number of parliamentarians in meetings and encounters,

the President expressed the hope that the UK would pursue an “ethical policy” on Kashmir. He appealed to all political parties of the UK to pass motions and resolutions on Kashmir during party conferences and conventions. He said that Kashmiris’ pursuit for justice and self-determination had become more difficult and complex because of the tidal wave of violent extremism, fanaticism, majoritarianism and Hindutva in India which was targeting all minorities in India and, in particular, the people of Kashmir.