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Editorial

Dear Readers,

The world faces another deadly Palestinian-Israel war since October 7, 2023 that has seen Israel launch an air and ground attack of Gaza that led to martyrdom of 11, 320 Palestinians including more than 4650 children, 3150 women and more than 29, 200 injured. It is a shame that besides United Nations and lacs taking to streets in world capitals, the western powers have done nothing to secure an early ceasefire. Thirty-seven staff members of the UN Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) in Palestine have tragically lost their lives, many with their families and homes. 40 UNRWA buildings and warehouses have been damaged by Israeli strikes. As noted by one UN official working in Palestine, Gaza- the largest open-air prison in the world- has today become the graveyard of a population trapped between war, siege and deprivation. This issue of PIPS Parliamentary Research Digest covers an analysis on latest situation and statements by the world leaders on the catastrophic development that yet again knocks at world conscious to wake up and work out an amicable two-state solutions, where Palestinians are given back their pre-1967 territory.

The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services continues its research and capacity building initiatives as per its annual workplan 2023-24. A landmark 2nd National Training of Trainers on Parliamentary Studies was hosted by PIPS Research wing on October 18-20, 2023 with more than 50 participants including Members of Parliament, experts and faculty members from universities from four provinces as well as twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi to inculcate and research on Constitutionalism, Legislative Assessment and the Parliament to students studying social sciences and law degrees. Similarly, the PDP wing held an absorbing and interactive "Train the Trainer" workshop for officers of National Assembly, Senate and PIPS on October 23-27, 2023 participated by 21 participants. Both these initiatives were supported by the EU Mustehkam Parlmaan Project implemented by the GIZ and PIPS.

This October 2023 Issue of the PIPS Parliamentary Research Digest includes articles on imperative theme including the Plight of Palestine in wake of recent conflict, colonial approach of India in the Illegally occupied Kashmir, set of recommendation of cross-party MPs Roundtable on Education Reforms and Inclusivity.

Please do not hesitate to send your feedback or contact for any of our services at research@pips.gov.pk

Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka
Director General (Research)



Group Photo of participants of 2nd National Training of the Trainers of 18 nationwide universities at Pakistan Institute For Parliamentary Services, October 18-20, 2023

¹INFORMATION

Statements and Reactions on Palestinian-Israel Conflict (October, 2023)

Compiled by
PIPS International Relations and Strategic Studies Desk

01. Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, Saudi Arabia in telephonic call with the President of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Mahmoud Abbas, October 09, 2023: "The kingdom continues to stand by the Palestinian people in their pursuit of their legitimate rights, striving for a dignified life, realizing their hopes and aspirations, and achieving a just and lasting peace."²

02. Iranian Spiritual leader Ali Khamenei, October 17, 2023: "If the crimes of the Zionist [Israeli] regime continue, Muslims and resistance forces will become impatient, and no one can stop them...The bombardment of Gaza must stop immediately...Regarding the situation in Gaza, we all have a responsibility to react; we must react."

03. President of Pakistan, Dr Arif Alvi, visit to Palestinian Embassy in Islamabad, October 19, 2023: "Pakistan would always stand by Palestine and would only accept a solution that was acceptable to the Palestinians."³

04. United Nations Secretary General Antonia Guterres at the UN Security Council, October 24, 2023: Guterres voicing concern about "clear violations of international humanitarian law" in the Gaza Strip told the 15-member U.N. Security Council that "It was vital to be clear that war has rules, starting with the fundamental principle of respecting and protecting civilians...it is important to also recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum. The Palestinian people have been subjected to 56 years of suffocating occupation... But the grievances of the Palestinian people cannot justify the appalling attacks by Hamas. And those appalling attacks cannot justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people."⁴

05. Hon Raja Pervez Ashraf, Speaker of the National Assembly and former Prime Minister of Pakistan, October 24, 2023: "The establishment of global peace is interlinked with the resolution of Palestinian and Kashmir issue as per UN resolutions...The right to self-determination of the people of Palestine and Kashmir cannot be suppressed by cruelty and coercion. The world at large and the UN needs to play a proactive role to immediately halt the genocide of the oppressed Palestinian and Kashmiri people by Israel and India. The United Nations should take notice of the violations of basic human rights in Palestine and Kashmir."⁵

06. Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations (UN) HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al Thani at the UN General Assembly 10th Emergency Meeting, October

¹ Reuters Report See at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-khamenei-says-no-one-can-stop-resistance-forces-if-israels-crimes-continue-2023-10-17/> browsed Oct., 28, 2023.

² "MBS pledges to stand with Palestine as normalization hopes fade." *The Cradle.Co*, October 10, 2023

³ "President condemns Israeli Brutalities in Gaza." *Business Recorder*, October 19, 2023.

⁴ Michelle Nichols, "UN chief rejects Israel accusations he justified Hamas attacks." *Reuters*, October 25, 2023

⁵ World Peace is interlinked with resolving Palestinian and Kashmir issue as per aspirations of people of Palestine and Kashmir says NA Speaker" *The National Assembly of Pakistan*, October 30, 2023, https://na.gov.pk/en/pressrelease_detail.php?id=5896

24, 2023: "Qatar is committed to diplomatic efforts to end bloodshed of Palestinians. UN General Assembly must uphold its responsibility in safeguarding international peace and security based on the charter and its resolution No 377 A (V), which was given the title 'Uniting for Peace'. Qatar calls on all parties to de-escalate the situation, attain a full ceasefire, immediately release all prisoners, especially the civilians, ensure delivery of urgent assistance into the Gaza Strip and open safe corridors that allow entry of humanitarian assistance... Qatar reiterates its condemnation of all forms of attacks on civilians, especially women and children, as well as its categorical rejection of the full blockade imposed by Israel, the existing occupation power, on Gaza Strip which deprives 2.3 million humans, half of them are children, of their fundamental needs, including water, food, medicines and electricity."⁶

07. Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, in meeting with Palestinian Ambassador Ahmad Jawad Rabei, October 25, 2023: "At this critical juncture, it is imperative that the international community mobilises to put an early end to unfolding human tragedy due to disproportionate and unlawful use of force by Israeli Defence Forces and desist from encouraging them to continue perpetrating atrocities in manifest violation of all norms of civility and humane conduct... Incessant attacks on civilian population, schools, universities, aid workers, hospitals and the forced exodus of Palestinians from Gaza are manifest crimes against humanity... Pakistan believes that the fresh spate of violence in Gaza is the result of unabated repression, continued human rights violations and state-sponsored sacrilege of Al Aqsa mosque. Conflating this war with terrorism would be naïve; taking a narrow and self-serving view of the issue as an isolated attack, obscures brutal oppression spanning decades that has led to this outcome."⁷

08. Munir Akram Pakistan's Ambassador to UN, October 26, 2023: Pakistan strongly and unequivocally condemns Israeli air strikes and the systematic and barbaric crimes against the Palestinians, particularly the attacks on schools and residential buildings and even hospitals, such as Ahli Baptist hospital where hundreds of sick and injured civilians were killed. These Israeli attacks on civilians, civilian objects and infrastructure, blockade of water, food and fuel, as well as the forced transfer of people from the occupied territory, are flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity."⁸

09. Tayyeb Rajeb Erdogan, President of Turkiye, speaking to a huge crowd in Istanbul, waving Palestinian Flags, October 28, 2023: "Israel has been openly committing war crimes for 22 days, but the Western leaders cannot even call on Israel for a ceasefire, let alone react to it... We will tell the whole world that Israel is a war criminal. We are making preparations for this. We will declare Israel a war criminal."⁹

10. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, October 29, 2023: Israel's ongoing bombardment of Gaza "may force everyone" to act."¹⁰

⁶ "Qatar is committed to diplomatic efforts to end bloodshed of Palestinians." *Qatar Tribune*, October 29, 2023.

⁷ "COAS reaffirms support to Palestinians." *The Dawn*, October 25, 2023

⁸ "Israeli killing machine must be stopped in Gaza and the West Bank, Pakistan tells UN." *The South Asia Times*, October 27, 2023.

⁹ "Eclipsing Turkey's centenary, Erdogan tells pro-Palestinian rally: Israel is occupier." *Reuters*, October 28, 2023.

¹⁰ "Iran's Raisi Says Israeli Actions In Gaza 'May Force Everyone' To Act" Radio Free Europe, October 29, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-hamas-israel-warning-raisi/32658621.html>

11. Interim Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Jalil Abbas Jillani, Sept., 29, 2023: Our policy is linked to the rights of the Palestinian people; Pakistan believes in a “two-state solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations and OIC resolutions as well as international law, with pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem) as the capital of Palestine.”¹¹

12. Final Communiqué of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) dated on October 18, 2023¹²:

The Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, in its extraordinary open-ended meeting held at the level of foreign ministers on Wednesday, 3 Rabi’ al-Thani 1445, corresponding to October 18, 2023, upon the joint invitation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the current session of the Islamic Summit and Chair of the Executive Committee, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, to discuss the ongoing Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people,

Recalling the principles and objectives contained in the Charter of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation,

Emphasizing all resolutions issued by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation regarding the issue of Palestine and the City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif,

Reaffirming its emphasis on the centrality of the Palestinian issue for the entire Islamic Ummah;

Supporting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, most notably their right to self-determination and the return of Palestinian refugees, their right to independence, and the embodiment of the independent and sovereign State of Palestine on the borders of June 4th, 1967, with its capital, Al-Quds Al-Sharif, As well as his legitimate right to self-defense to confront the Israeli aggression that targets their lives, their sanctities, and their properties.

In light of the blatant and unprecedented Israeli aggression in the occupied Palestinian territory and the heinous massacres perpetrated against civilians in Gaza Strip by the Israeli occupation forces, which led to hundreds of innocent civilian casualties, thousands of injuries, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands through the demolition of their homes,

- i. Calls for the immediate cessation of the barbaric aggression of the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people and the immediate lifting of the siege imposed to the Gaza Strip; Reaffirms its strong condemnation of the unprecedented aggression against civilians in the besieged Gaza Strip and the entire occupied Palestinian territory by killing, bombing, deliberately destroying infrastructure, threatening to commit atrocities and to exterminate them, as well as the absolute rejection of targeting civilians under any pretext or displacing them from their homes, or starving and depriving them of safe access to humanitarian aid in contravention of all international norms and laws, and of the most basic humanitarian principles and values;
- ii. Calls upon all countries to quickly provide humanitarian, medical and relief aid, water and electricity, and to open humanitarian corridors immediately in order to safely deliver urgent aid to the Gaza Strip, including through the United Nations institutions particularly the United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and support its efforts in this regard; Warns of the danger of continuing the policy of deliberate targeting of civilians and collective punishment accompanied by policies of

¹¹ The Dawn newspaper, see at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1778326>, browsed Oct 17, 2023.

¹² "Final Communiqué of the extraordinary open-ended meeting of the OIC Executive Committee at the level of Foreign Ministers on the brutal Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian people," Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, October 18, 2023, https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=39767&t_ref=26705&lan=en

- starvation, water deprivation, and the stopping of the only power generation station in Gaza Strip suspended due to the prevention of fuel access, portending a real disaster for all health and humanitarian services, in contravention of international humanitarian law and amounting to the commission of international crimes, including the crime against humanity.
- iii. Strongly condemns the blatant targeting by Israel's brutal occupation forces of Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza Strip, which killed and injured hundreds of innocent sick, injured and displaced innocent civilians, which represents a war crime, extermination and a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, ethics and international and humanitarian instruments, Calls upon the international community to act swiftly and to hold the Israeli occupation accountable for these heinous war crimes against the Palestinian people and humanity as at large, and calls for immediate intervention to halt this massacre;
 - iv. Israel, the occupying power, bears full responsibility for the fate of civilians in the Gaza Strip and the real tragedy they are subjected to under bombardment, siege, and starvation, without electricity, food, or clean water, while being forced to abandon their homes, and for the policy of indiscriminate collective punishment that it applies in a flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law, as well as its legal responsibilities as the occupying power in accordance with the Geneva Conventions;
 - v. Stresses the importance of preserving the lives of all civilians, and not targeting them in any way being inconsistent with international law and international humanitarian law, as well as divine laws.
 - vi. Rejects categorically calls to displace the population of Gaza Strip and affirms its support for the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on their land; Stresses the importance for the international community to play its role in preventing any attempt of forced displacement of the Palestinian population from their land, transferring the crisis to the neighboring countries and exacerbating issue of Palestinian refugees whom right to compensation and return must be met with in the framework of a comprehensive solution to the conflict that addresses the final status issues in conformity with the pertinent UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative; stopping the military escalation, lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip, and contributing urgently to the entry of relief and humanitarian aid for civilians;
 - vii. Expresses its strong regret and condemnation of the failure of the United Nations Security Council and its inability to discharge its responsibilities by taking a decisive decision to halt the war crimes carried out by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip and all Palestinian territory, which negatively affect the Security Council's role in maintaining international peace and security and protecting unarmed civilians;
 - viii. Calls upon the United Nations and the UN Security Council to assume its responsibilities, to take all urgent measures to ensure an end to the brutal and barbaric aggression against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip and the entire Palestinian territory, to allow the entry of humanitarian aid, to provide protection for defenseless Palestinian civilians, and to stop the escalating humanitarian catastrophe carried out by the forces of the illegal Israeli occupation;
 - ix. Warns of the escalation of attacks by the Israeli occupation army and settler terrorism weaponed and protected by the occupation forces in Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the West Bank in their continuing aggression against the civilian population and their properties, including killing, destroying, displacing, building and expanding settlements, within the framework of its brutal colonial campaign aimed at annexing the occupied Palestinian territory and affirms the importance of preserving sanctity of holy sites in Al-Quds, and the full protection of Al-Aqsa Mosque as well as the prevention of the violation of the status and sanctity of sacred places in Al-Quds;
 - x. Stresses the support of the Government of the State of Palestine at all levels, including the political, economic and financial levels, as well as its international and legal endeavors, to halt

- the heinous crimes, including the crime of genocide against the Palestinian people; National Authority those perpetrated by the Israeli occupation authorities;
- xi. Deplores the international positions that back the brutal aggression against the Palestinian people, and grant Israel impunity, taking advantage of the double standards that provide cover for the occupying power and fuel the conflict, which will only lead to increased violence and destruction, and seek to punish the Palestinian people, including cutting off humanitarian aid to them;
 - xii. Reaffirms that peace, security and stability in the region will not be achieved without putting an end to the Israeli colonial occupation and its oppressive practices against the Palestinian people and by empowering the Palestinian people with their inalienable rights, particularly their right to self-determination, independence and return, on the basis of the international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy;
 - xiii. Calls upon international actors to engage in sponsoring a serious political path to achieve peace based on ending the illegal Israeli occupation that had begun in 1967 and implementing the two-state solution, within a clear time frame, as stipulated in the rules of international law and United Nations resolutions, and referring to the Peace process and the Arab Peace Initiative;
 - xiv. Calls upon the missions of the member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in the capitals and international organizations to take immediate action to convey the OIC's position to the capitals of the countries and organizations to which they are accredited and to work with the necessary speed up their endeavours towards condemning and stopping the aggression, and ensuring the provision of the necessary humanitarian supplies to the Palestinian people;
 - xv. Calls on Member states to apply all feasible and effective diplomatic, legal and deterrent measures, to stop the occupying power Israel's crimes against humanity.
 - xvi. Calls for an Extraordinary CFM meeting at the GS Headquarters to discuss the ongoing crimes of Israel against the Palestinian people.
 - xvii. Request the Secretary-General to identify the possible set of effective and concrete measures as soon as possible and present it to the next Extraordinary CFM meeting.
 - xviii. Stresses the need to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, in conformity with international humanitarian law standards as has been repeatedly advocated by the United Nations General Assembly, including in resolution ES-10/20 of 13 June 2018 and in line with the Final Communique of the 7th Extraordinary Islamic Summit, by dispatching an international protection force to protect innocent lives from ongoing attacks by the occupation forces and the extremist colonialist settlers ;
 - xix. Assigns the Secretary General of the Organization to communicate with the five permanent members of the Security Council / the Secretary-General of the United Nations / the High Commissioner for Human Rights / the President of the European Union, and to continue coordination with regional and international organizations, including the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the African Union and the Non-Aligned Movement in order to take the necessary steps aiming to compel Israel to stop all its violations, attacks and crimes and to work to provide international protection for the Palestinian people;
 - xx. Mandates the Secretary-General to follow up on the implementation of the present final communiqué and to report thereon to the next meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers.

ANALYSIS

Israeli War on Gaza October 2023**Fakiha Mahmood**

Deputy Director (Research), PIPS

1. Introduction

Israel-Palestine conflict has haunted world peace since the illegal occupation of Palestinian Muslim majority region by Israel in 1948 with its declaration of independence that sparked the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, which resulted in the Palestinian expulsion and flight from their homeland. It followed waves of Jewish emigration from other parts of the world especially Middle East to change local demography in Israel's favour. In 1967 war, Israel further extended its illegal and undemocratic occupation of Palestinian territory.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas freedom fighters of Palestine launched the “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” targeting Israel from ground, air and sea theatres. The offensive killed more than 700 Israelis, including soldiers and commandos, while almost 100 Israeli citizens were taken to Gaza as hostages. Hamas launched series of rocket attacks towards Israeli cities targeting 22 locations outside Gaza strip. Israel, surprised by remarkable attacks, declared war on Gaza and besieged the enclave blocking access to power, water and essential services. Israel had martyred 200 Palestinians the day before the attack injuring 1400 people. In the name of retaliatory attacks, the apartheid regime took lives of 232 Palestinians the next day.¹ Israel has called its three lac sixty thousand reserve force to support the war in Gaza.² One wonders, as to how a so-called state has gathered such a heavily armed gigantic force to counter 2.3 million population, majority among them women and children, residing in the besieged enclave facing impoverishment since past two decades ever since the imposition of blockade. Fatalities continue to rise with each single day. Over the course of more than three weeks, Israel indiscriminately bombarded densely populated civilian areas in the besieged enclave killing more than 8,000 people including almost 40% innocent kids and around 2000 women. The fresh wave of violence and war culminated into widespread protests around the world demanding cessation of hostilities and protection innocent civilians besides opening of humanitarian spaces around the besieged enclave.

António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations rightly pointed out during the Security Council meeting that “it is important to also recognize the attacks by Hamas did not happen in a vacuum.”³ Palestinians are increasingly exhausted due to Israeli atrocities in the occupied territories. Even a day before the Hamas attacks in the Israeli, the Zionists martyred more than 200 people in a single day in Gaza which reels from nearly two decades of blockade retarding socio-economic development. Recently, Israelis have significantly increased intrusions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Violence erupted in May this year as a result of Israeli incursion into the Al Aqsa Mosque during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The Israeli incursions into the Al Aqsa Mosque have already invited severe criticism from the regional countries and countries across the Muslim world. The Parliamentary Union of the Organization for Islamic Conference (OIC) noted these developments with severe condemnation when on October 5, 2023 the Secretary General issued statement in response to Zionists storming into Al Aqsa Mosque. The Secretary General noted with concern repeated incursions of Zionist settlers into the Al Aqsa Mosque compound with due protection from the Israeli law enforcement forces. The Israeli settlers indulged in provocative rituals on one hand and the Israeli forces adopted aggressive

¹ The News, “Israel humbled by intelligence failure, spectacular Hamas attack,” 08 October 2023; Dawn, “Unparalleled raids stun Israeli Goliath,” 08 October 2023.

² Ali Osman, “Israel's Gaza Gambit,” *Express Tribune*, 29 October 2023.

³ Dawn, “UN Chief points to violations of international law in Gaza,” 25 October 2023, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1783491/un-chief-points-to-violations-of-international-law-in-gaza>.

posture towards Palestinian women engaged in worship in the Mosque. The growing incidents by Israeli settlers are seen as deliberate attempts to force Palestinians to leave the sacred places in order to enlarge the Israeli space in the historical religious sites.⁴

2. Fresh Wave of Israeli War Crimes

Ever since its inception into the world political map, Israel has disregarded all international norms and legal instruments and targeted its opponents in a ruthless manner. The fresh wave of war and violence in the Palestinian territories illegally occupied by Israel is leaving new records of Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity.

- i. **Indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas:** over the course of almost one month, Israel has razed the entire Gaza enclave through indiscriminate bombardment of civilian residential areas. Media reports published on October 13, 2023 highlight that Israel dropped 6000 bombs on civilian areas in just first five days of the war. Those martyred include women and innocent children as old as few days. Carrying little dead bodies in their hands Palestinians ask from the world, are they terrorists?
- ii. **Dismembered bodies and mass graves:** Indiscriminate attacks by Israel into unarmed civilian residential areas are culminating into large number of dead bodies which often get buried in mass graves. Reports point to killing of entire generations of families in targeted attacks. Many of the dead bodies are unidentifiable due to their dismemberment or because no one among the family members survived to recognize them. Many of the dismembered bodies include innocent kids. On October 17, 2023, Palestinian authorities reported that almost 1000 people were missing under the rubble as the lack of necessary equipment hindered rescue efforts in targeted infrastructure.
- iii. **Use of phosphorous gas and other prohibited ammunition:** Media reports quoting Human Rights Watch are highlighting that Israel has been using phosphorous gas and other prohibited ammunitions while targeting the civilian areas.
- iv. **Blocking access to humanitarian aid:** Israel has been using starvation as a method to exhaust the civilian population. Zionists have blocked access to humanitarian aid into the Gaza. UN and other agencies have been reported acute shortage of basic healthcare and daily life necessities. Palestinians are forced to use sea water as Israel has blocked access essential services and commodities.
- v. **Targeting hospitals:** The October 17, 2023 witnessed the worst nightmare when Israel attacked the Al-Ahli Al-Mamadani Hospital where hundreds of Palestinians had taken refuge amid heavy Israeli air strikes. The single attack took more than 500 lives majority of them women and children. While healthcare facilities face acute shortage of medical supplies amid significant increase in the incoming patients, Israel issued evacuation order to the Al-Quds hospital and attacked nearby buildings as a warning for attacking the largest healthcare facility in the besieged enclave.
- vi. **Destroying mosques and churches:** Mosques and churches have been destroyed over the course of nearly a month. Some of them had sheltered Palestinians from both Muslim and Christian faiths fleeing Israeli attacks on residential areas.
- vii. **Blocking worshipers' access to Al-Aqsa Mosque:** Ever since the eruption of violence in Gaza, the situation is worsening in the West Bank. As per media reports, Israel has blocked access to the Al-Aqsa and number of worshipers in the Mosque has been reduced significantly over the past few weeks.

⁴ "Secretary General strongly condemns Zionists storming of blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque," October 05, 2023, <http://en.puic.org/news/14658>.

- viii. **Attacking media personnel:** The media fraternity is yet another victim of Israeli brutality. The fascist Israeli regime continues to suppress the voice of press through targets on their personnel and infrastructure. Hundreds of journalists have been killed over the course of decades of Israeli occupation. While the Aljazeera network mourned the killing of its veteran Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in May this year, the October war took lives of four family members of Al-Jazeera Gaza Bureau Chief Wael Dahdouh, including his 45 years old wife, 16 years old son, a daughter and 45 days grandson.
- ix. **Communications blackout:** In order to hide its war crimes in Gaza, Israel has severed internet and phone services.
- x. **Insulting UN Secretary General:** Israeli diplomats, carrying the legacy of no respect for law or civilized norms, demanded resignation of the United Nations Secretary General for few true-words he spoke in favor of innocent Palestinians suffering Israeli atrocities in the fresh wave of violence and conflict.
- xi. **Killing UN staffers:** Dozens of staffers of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near-East (UNRWA working since 1950) have lost their lives ever since the eruption of violence in the aftermath of October 07, 2023 onslaught. Had it been any other country of the world other than Israel, its membership in the United Nations would surely have been terminated on account of such disregard towards UN officials and staffers.
- xii. **Millions of Gaza residents displaced, thousands flee border areas in Lebanon:** Millions of people in Gaza have been displaced due to the onset of war and thousands of Lebanese have also been displaced in areas bordering Israel due to Israeli attacks in the Lebanese territory.

3. The Palestinian Question at the United Nations

Palestinian conflict is one of the oldest disputes on the UN agenda. The latest Israeli war on Gaza took the issue at the UN once again.

a. Security Council:

The prime UN body vested with the responsibility to maintain international peace and security as per the Charter of the UN took up the Gaza war, ten days after the eruption of violence. Yet the Council rejected the Russian sponsored resolution demanding humanitarian ceasefire in the war zone, release of hostages, access to humanitarian aid, and safe evacuation of civilians. China, Gabon, Mozambique, Russia and the UAE voted in favor of the resolution; France, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States voted against; and Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, Ghana, Malta, and Switzerland abstained from voting. Those against the resolution highlighted that the text did not condemn Hamas for October 07, 2023 escalation of violence.⁵ Similarly, the US sponsored resolution failed to muster support from China and Russia, while the US vetoed the Russian sponsored second draft resolution calling for immediate cessation of hostilities. Ten members supported the US led resolution. China, Russia and UAE were against the resolution, and Brazil along with Mozambique abstained from voting. Chinese and Russian vetoes killed the resolution. The Russian led second draft resolution received yes vote from China, Gabon and UAE besides Russia, nine members abstained from voting on this resolution including; Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland. However, US and

⁵ "Security Council rejects Russian resolution on Gaza," October 16, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142427>.

UK vetoes killed this resolution. The Security Council's failure to stop the war pushed the diplomatic community to take up the issue in the General Assembly.⁶

b. General Assembly:

The General Assembly resumed an emergency special session to debate the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza on October 26, 2023 that ended with the adoption of Jordanian resolution titled "Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations." The resolution gathered support from 120 members, 14 countries voted against the resolution, and 45 states abstained from voting. Notable states who voted against the resolution include Austria, Croatia and the United States. Noteworthy abstentions include Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Ukraine and United Kingdom. Moreover, the French support for the Jordanian draft is yet another departure from the general US and western allies' grouping. The most interesting case is that of Ukraine, a country which was begging for humanitarian considerations a few months ago for its civilian population abstained from voting on a resolution calling for the protection of civilians in Gaza and the respect for international humanitarian law in the Palestinian land. Pakistan played instrumental role in ensuring the safe adoption of the Jordanian draft when Canadian amendment tried to change the language of the resolution in a way that it could have supported the Israeli rhetoric on the current issue. The compelling speech of Mr Munir Akram, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan at the UN, which followed the speech of Canadian representative convinced the delegates present in the General Assembly hall that the Jordanian draft be adopted in its present form.

Figure: VOTING ON THE JORDANIAN DRAFT RESOLUTION IN UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Voting Ended		10/27/2023		3:49:01 PM	
Item 5 - A/ES-10/L.25					
Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humaniatarian obligations					
AFGHANISTAN	CAMEROON	FINLAND	KUWAIT	NEPAL	SAUDI ARABIA
ALBANIA	CANADA	FRANCE	KYRGYZSTAN	NETHERLAN...	SENEGAL
ALGERIA	CENTRAL AF...	GABON	LAO PDR	NEW ZEALAND	SERBIA
ANDORRA	CHAD	GAMBIA	LATVIA	NICARAGUA	SEYCHELLES
ANGOLA	CHILE	GEORGIA	LEBANON	NIGER	SIERRA LEONE
ANTIGUA-BA...	CHINA	GERMANY	LESOTHO	NIGERIA	SINGAPORE
ARGENTINA	COLOMBIA	GHANA	LIBERIA	NORTH MAC...	SLOVAKIA
ARMENIA	COMOROS	GREECE	LIBYA	NORWAY	SLOVENIA
AUSTRALIA	CONGO	GRENADA	LIECHTENSTEIN	OMAN	SOLOMON IS...
AUSTRIA	COSTA RICA	GUATEMALA	LITHUANIA	PAKISTAN	SOMALIA
AZERBAIJAN	COTE D'IVOIRE	GUINEA	LUXEMBOURG	PALAU	SOUTH AFRICA
BAHAMAS	CROATIA	GUINEA-BISS...	MADAGASCAR	PANAMA	SOUTH SUDAN
BAHRAIN	CUBA	GUYANA	MALAWI	PAPUA NEW ...	SPAIN
BANGLADESH	CYPRUS	HAITI	MALAYSIA	PARAGUAY	SRI LANKA
BARBADOS	CZECHIA	HONDURAS	MALDIVES	PERU	SUDAN
BELARUS	DEM PR OF K...	HUNGARY	MALI	PHILIPPINES	SURINAME
BELGIUM	DEM REP OF ...	ICELAND	MALTA	POLAND	SWEDEN
BELIZE	DENMARK	INDIA	MARSHALL IS...	PORTUGAL	SWITZERLAND
BENIN	DJIBOUTI	INDONESIA	MAURITANIA	QATAR	SYRIAN ARA...
BHUTAN	DOMINICA	IRAN (ISLAMI...	MAURITIUS	REP OF KOREA	TAJIKISTAN
BOLIVIA	DOMINICAN ...	IRAQ	MEXICO	REP OF MOL...	THAILAND
BOSNIA-HER...	ECUADOR	IRELAND	MICRONESIA...	ROMANIA	TIMOR-LESTE
BOTSWANA	EGYPT	ISRAEL	MONACO	RUSSIAN FED...	TOGO
BRAZIL	EL SALVADOR	ITALY	MONGOLIA	RWANDA	TONGA
BRUNEI DAR...	EQUATORIAL...	JAMAICA	MONTENEGRO	SAINT KITTS...	TRINIDAD-TO...
BULGARIA	ERITREA	JAPAN	MOROCCO	SAINT LUCIA	TUNISIA
BURKINA FASO	ESTONIA	JORDAN	MOZAMBIQUE	SAINT VINCE...	TURKMENIST...
BURUNDI	ESWATINI	KAZAKHSTAN	MYANMAR	SAMOA	TUVALU
CABO VERDE	ETHIOPIA	KENYA	NAMIBIA	SAN MARINO	TÜRKIYE
CAMBODIA	FIJI	KIRIBATI	NAURU	SAO TOME-P...	UGANDA
IN FAVOUR: 120		AGAINST:14		ABSTENTION:45	

Source: UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

⁶ "Gaza crisis: deadlock deepens as Security Council rejects competing resolutions by US and Russia," October 25, 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/10/1142817>.

4. A Protection Force for Palestinians?

While the adoption of General Assembly is indeed an encouraging step in international diplomacy but the fact of the matter is that the resolution is non-binding and symbolic. It retains little or no potential to stop the ongoing Israeli rampage on the civilian population in Gaza. World needs to go a step ahead in order to protect Palestinians from Israeli war crimes and the Zionists' continued crimes against humanity since 1948. The proposal floated during the OIC foreign ministers meeting to deploy a protection force in the occupied Palestinian areas should be given serious consideration. South Africa has already called for a UN deployment force to protect civilians in the war zone.

While Arab states, especially Egypt, have been advocating Palestinians to stay in their land and avoid displacement as part of the broader strategy to contain increasing illegal Israeli occupation, at the same time they must ensure humanitarian space for those suffering for years at the Israeli atrocities against innocent civilians, including women and children. Israel has repeatedly demonstrated utter disregard for humanitarian values or any kind of a legal framework at any level. International community must now chalk-out a workable framework in order to protect the civilians living under the Israeli occupation.

5. Geopolitical reverberations

- i. **US support to Israeli crimes:** The United States along with some European states have received widespread condemnation for their support to blatant Israeli atrocities in the occupied Palestinian territories. The increased military deployment in the region following the onset of war created ripples in the regional countries. The visit of US President to Israel was coincided with Israeli attack of the Palestinian hospital which took lives of more than five hundred civilians. The failure of the US President to condemn the attack in unequivocal manner demonstrated US injustice towards humanitarian values. The US diplomacy at the UN Security Council which culminated into a deadlock rather than a decisive move which could ensure humanitarian ceasefire in the war-ravaged territory created yet another example of US complicity towards Israeli atrocities in occupied Palestinian territories.
- ii. **War beyond Gaza:** The immediate announcement of Hezbollah stationed in Lebanon to enter the war signaled the spread of war flames beyond Gaza. Israeli strikes into the Lebanese territory have created unrest in the neighboring country. Though a full-scale war has not been opened so far between Hezbollah and Israel, if war in Gaza continues it may spiral to include another theatre of war for Israel in the north. The US deployment of aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean Sea has already invited criticism from Türkiye. Israel has already called its diplomats from Türkiye sensing difficult situation. Turkish President has denounced Israeli atrocities in Gaza while terming Hamas freedom fighters rather than terrorists. Millions of Turks took to the street to protest the ongoing Israeli savagery in the occupied Palestinian territories. Similarly, the US airstrikes in Syria citing Iranian influence point to the broader expansion of violence in the region including a number of actors outside Palestine.
- iii. **Threatened Abraham Accords:** The so-called Abraham Accords brokered by US under Trump Administration, culminated into diplomatic normalization between Israel and United Arab Emirates. Abraham Accords aimed at creating diplomatic

thaw between Israel and Arab nations especially Saudi Arabia. The Gaza war has erupted at a time when the talks of a possible Saudi-Israeli diplomatic normalization had reached a new zenith and the US alongside the Israeli leadership were quite confident about a potential breakthrough in the near future. However, the fresh wave of war and violence has severely dented the accords to secure Israeli diplomatic recognition by Saudi Arabia.

- iv. **Ukraine and Gaza - a tale of two wars:** While Palestinians have gone through subsequent cycles of war and violence ever since the creation of Israel, the current war on Gaza has created ethical as well as policy dilemmas for the US and its European allies who have been providing heavy military as well as diplomatic support to Ukraine in the backdrop of its war with Russian Federation. The Israeli war efforts in Gaza have created difficult choices for US which became apparent when the question of providing aid to Israel amid military support to Ukraine was brought forth in the US policy making circles.

6. Parliamentary diplomacy on the Israeli war on Gaza

The Parliamentary Union of the OIC held an emergency meeting on October 16, 2023 to deliberate the ongoing situation in occupied Palestinian territories in Gaza. The virtual meeting included members of parliament representing 32 countries and Speakers of Parliaments from 13 countries. Honorable members from across the Muslim world denounced the Israeli war on Gaza and called for immediate ceasefire alongside the provision of humanitarian assistance without hindrance.⁷

The Speaker of the Malaysian House of Representatives also wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the PUIC expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people encouraging the MPs across the PUIC membership to actively engage in parliamentary diplomacy with the objective to ensure peace and security for the innocent Palestinian people who continue to suffer at the hands of the apartheid Israeli illegal occupation. The letter also denounces Israeli desecration of Al Aqsa Mosque.⁸ The President of the PUIC also denounced the Israeli deliberate attack on Al-Ahli Al-Mamadani Hospital which martyred more than 500 people including a large number of children sheltering in the hospital to escape indiscriminate Israeli bombing.⁹ Turkish lawmakers are seeking to go beyond mere statements.

The Human Rights Committee of the Turkish Parliament is preparing to visit the besieged enclave in order to record on ground humanitarian situation in the war zone and chart the way for the provision of humanitarian assistance.¹⁰

7. Conclusion

While the mainstream media and other sources are flooded with the reports highlighting the Hamas military operation into the Israeli territories as the immediate trigger of the Israeli war on

⁷ "PUIC holds emergency meeting to discuss dangerous developments in the Palestinian territories," October 16, 2023, <http://en.puic.org/news/14679>.

⁸ Available at: <http://en.puic.org/news/14698>.

⁹ "PUIC President condemns the targeting of the Al-Ahli-Al-Mamadani Hospital in Gaza Strip," October 18, 2023, <http://en.puic.org/news/14689>.

¹⁰ "Turkish lawmakers plan to visit Gaza as Israel's attacks persist," *Daily Sabah*, October 25, 2023, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/legislation/turkish-lawmakers-plan-to-visit-gaza-as-israels-attacks-persist>.

Gaza, the increasing tensions among the major stakeholders owing to the growing incursions of Zionist-settlers into the Muslim places of worship must not be overlooked. It remains the biggest reason for Palestinian military factions having no option but to point their guns towards Israel. Moreover, continuous Israeli atrocities in the occupied Palestinian territories causing human and socio-economic losses in Gaza strip and the West Bank create deep anger and frustration among Palestinians. The cycles of violence, ceasefire and again back to normal are in fact a regular feature between Israel and Palestine, however the latest eruption of war in Gaza may change the status quo if Israel continues to advance in the Gaza strip.

Moreover, a continuation of war can create violent episodes in the region beyond Gaza. The West Bank has already been under greater attacks from Israeli settlers. Though in material terms Israeli enjoys upper hand due to unrelenting military, economic and diplomatic support it has enjoyed from US and western allies over the course of decades, Hamas has given Israelis tough time and they are resisting Israeli onslaught in a valiant manner.

The challenges Israel faces in Lebanon due to presence of Hezbollah alongside the burden of Ukraine war heavily supported by the US may create daunting challenges for Israel to bring significant changes in the status quo. Despite all these possibilities and apprehensions, whatever the outcomes of the war may be, fact of the matter is that the humanity will never be able to get rid of the burden of thousands of little dead bodies accumulated over the course of past seven decades.

ANALYSIS

India's Brutal Colonialism in Illegally Occupied Kashmir**Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka**

Director General (Research), PIPS

The October 27, 2023 marks seventy-five years of Indian illegal occupation of Kashmir as the then Indian government conspired with local Hindu maharaja on October 27, 1947 to occupy the Muslim-majority princely state. It was an open violation of the June 03, 1947 partition plan whereby whole of Kashmir was to become part of the newly independent Pakistan due to predominantly Muslim majority population. The UN Security Council Resolution 47 (1948) / [adopted by the Security Council at its 286th meeting], of April 21, 1948; and several other later resolutions prescribed that final disposition of the conflict will be decided by the Kashmiri people through a free and fair plebiscite under UN auspices.

Both Pakistan and India have fought deadly wars due to the longstanding dispute since 1947 as the United Nations resolutions in 1948-49 reiterating the decision of self-determination to be exercised by the Kashmiri people are yet to be implemented through an impartial plebiscite. Since 1945-46, around eighty colonies have gained independence. Yet there are people who are still denied the right of self-determination after more than seven decades.

The Hindu-nationalist Bharati Janata Party regime under Prime Minister Narendra Modi removed the Article 370 in India's constitution on August 05, 2019, which led to forcibly run the Muslim-majority region through direct control of federal government by state oppression undertaken by bureaucrats with no democratic credentials and presence of 9 lac Indian Troops and paramilitary forces as the region is practically divided into two regions – Jammu-Kashmir and Laddakh occupied by the “gun,” with no legislature. The abrogation of article 370 yet again proved the betrayal and an assault on Kashmiris' separate identity and their basic human right of self-determination ultimately to decide the future of Kashmir. The Illegally Indian Occupied Kashmir consequently lost its “semi-autonomous status,” in addition to its separate flag, criminal code and the Constitution. It is clearly an attempt to change the demography of Kashmir by unabated killings of innocent and unarmed civilian Muslim-majority to trigger ethnic cleansing against the local community along with forced settlements.

A domicile law rolled out in 2020 made it possible for any Indian national who has lived in the region for at least 15 years or has studied for seven years to become a permanent resident of the region. That same year, the government also eased rules for Indian soldiers to acquire land in Kashmir and build “strategic” settlements.¹

Independent analysts and Indian intellectuals have termed it crude tyranny and categorical manifestation of an unconstitutional and fascist mindset of the present Indian regime. No less than 100,000 Kashmiris have been martyred at the hands of illegally occupying Indian troops in

¹ "India Court hears petitions challenging Separate Kashmir Special Status Removal," *Aljazeera*, October 02, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/2/india-top-court-hears-petitions-challenging-kashmir-special-status-removal>

this colonial systemic ethnic cleansing by the Indian troops. All the popular local Muslim-leadership were put in House-Arrest for the last four years since 2019 with societal life crippled in a curfew-like day routine.² The indigenous population fears that it is clear effort to fraudulently steal the result of a United Nations' promised plebiscite to be held under the 1948 UN resolutions that gave Kashmir the choice of joining either Pakistan or India.

As if the abrogation of Article 370 and the killings of over 100,000 Kashmiris since the indigenous independence movement gained public momentum in 1989, wasn't enough only early in May, 2023, India tried to hold an eye-wash G-20 meeting in the illegally occupied region. It was marred by extreme security measures and brutal media crackdown that saw arrest of four local mainstream journalists – Asif Sultan, Irfan Mehraj, Sajad Gul and Fahad Shah. Former CM and Kashmiri leader Mehbooba Mufti termed it a *“Guantanamo-Jail like situation created by India in the post 2019 abrogation through forced control by central BJP regime with practically all political leadership under arrest and a virtual curfew on the streets.”*

Fernand de Varennes, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority-Issues, termed India's disguise of normalization as *“brutal and repressive denial of democratic and basic rights of Kashmiri Muslims and minorities”* by holding G-20 meeting in the disputed region. The UN Rapporteur concluded that situation in illegally Indian occupied Kashmir *“should be decried and condemned and not pushed under the rug and ignored.”* Understandably, not only that reputed journalists' bodies based in New York, US and UK condemned the Indian brutality but China, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Egypt and Oman boycotted the G-20 meeting,³ condemning India's fascist effort to pose a false-impression of legitimacy of its forced control over a UN and globally recognized disputed territory and nuclear flash-point of the world.

Yaseen Malik, a Kashmiri proponent of independent Kashmir, be it in Pakistan's control or independent, has been facing a trial of life-imprisonment besides the fact that he had initiated a non-violent drive by collecting signatures in a petition of 1.5 million Kashmiris from hundreds of local villages in favour of independence of the Kashmiri majority people.⁴ He led a massive non-violent uprising against India in 2008 as leader of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front JKLF where he attended numerous failed parleys with Indian governments including two former Prime Ministers.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference, the populist representative coalition of Kashmiri political groups, said Malik was "being punished for his political beliefs" and was "convicted in invented cases under draconian laws."⁵ All these facts clearly reflect that India has fallen into insanity where it is not only closing eyes to righting on the wall that majority wants freedom from its brutal occupation on Jammu-Kashmir, but it is bent upon using worst reign of state-terrorism to kill, arrest and torture local Kashmiris especially the senior leaders and youth.

On September 01, 2021, the veteran 89 years old Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Gillani who also led the Kashmiris natural and democratic struggle to join Pakistan, breathed his last during continued house arrest since 2010. In an unparalleled and horrific act, his dead body was

² "Kashmir Special Status," 2023

³ Patrick Wintour, "Boycott of G20 Meeting in Kashmir," *The Guardian*, May 22, 2023.

⁴ Indian Court sentences Kashmiri Leader to life imprisonment, *The Voice of America*, October 26, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/indian-court-sentences-kashmiri-leader-to-life-in-prison-/6588928.html>

⁵ "Life Imprisonment," 2023

snatched by the Indian occupation forces from his family and hurriedly buried in a graveyard in the absence of his family and friends. The Secretary-General of World Kashmir Awareness Forum, Ghulam Nabi Fai paid high tributes to Syed Ali Geelani on his second death anniversary, terming him as “incorruptible and conscientious.” Fai is of the opinion that a common Kashmiri has lost faith in Indian democracy, calling it “sham democracy.” He quoted an analysis in *The Washington Post* that said:

“Over the years, he (Geelani) had repeatedly said no to any talks with New Delhi, asserting that “India can’t be trusted unless it calls Kashmir a disputed territory, demilitarizes the region and releases political prisoners for a meaningful dialogue.”⁶

On September 01, 2023, the biggest coalition of populist Kashmiri sentiments - All Parties Hurriyat Conference held a march towards the Hyderpora graveyard where Syed Ali Gilani is buried and all pro-freedom organisations supported the call to mark the second death anniversary of the hugely respected Kashmiri Leader all across the Kashmir and by worldwide Kashmiri diaspora in US, Canada, UK, Germany and China.

The killing of Nijjar in Canada at the hands of Indian-government agencies has exposed India’s blatant oppression of minorities. The non-violent Sikh leader of Khalistan Movement based in Canada was working for worldwide-independence movement calling for Sikhs freedoms from India. His death in Canada by Indian agencies has startled not only the Canadian people led by their Prime Minister Justin Trudeau but the whole human conscience as to what extent the fascist BJP regime under Modi can be tolerated and allowed by the world to oppress political dissent and genuine democratic and non-violent movements by minority communities opting for self-determination as perhaps the only option to live and survive peacefully after winning freedom from India.

The Parliament of Canada has enhanced its scrutiny and pressure on the Trudeau regime to share the intelligence reports and what is being termed as concrete evidence of India’s direct involvement of the murder of Sikh leader residing in Canada.

Pakistan must remain unmitigatedly committed to its principled stance that UN Resolutions affirm the disputed status of Kashmir, and Pakistan is an active party to the dispute so it has a prioritized obligation to uphold and support in every legitimate way at all forums the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people who have since 1989 fought an indigenous struggle for freedom.

India continues to undertake unlawful designs and actions to build dams such as Kishanganga, Baghliar and Rattle Dam/s in crude violation of the Indus Basin Treaty of 1960 sponsored by the World Bank. Envisioning peace with neighbors is a natural and pragmatic idea yet the fact remains that the US 17 billion dollars Living Indus Initiative to optimally make joint and all out efforts aimed at revitalizing the ecological well-being of the Indus River within Pakistan's borders, cannot be transformed into reality unless India is reminded of its responsibility to respect the Indus Basin Treaty. India should be told in firm and clear terms at every diplomatic

⁶ "The Express Tribune, Homage to Syed Ali Shah Gillani," Voice of America, October 25, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2433561/homage-paid-to-syed-ali-shah-geelani-on-second-death-anniversary>

instance that it cannot get away with the UN Resolutions to hold plebiscite to let Kashmiri people decide their fate for self-determination as a democratic and basic human right. Overcoming contemporary challenges and existential threats requires our leadership, political and bureaucratic, to work in unison for national cohesion and unity, not compromising our ideological lines as inherited from the Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah who always termed Kashmir as the jugular vein of Pakistan.

The world must be shown what India continues to do with the minorities within its borders. New pragmatism of trade, tourism, cultural and media exchanges cannot be started one-sidedly without any roadmap of progress on core issue of Kashmir and the Indus Basin Treaty. Independent experts and analysts believe we cannot afford to betray our principled commitments⁷ that have been followed by governments, leaders and people in Pakistan and Kashmir for most of the 75 years since our independence.

The non-allowance of visit visa to journalists and citizens to watch the 2023 cricket world cup in India, the continued abrogation of article 370 and brutalities in illegally held Kashmir and last but not the least killing of Sikh leader in Canada, speaks volume of India being an oppressor unleashing state-terrorism against unarmed non-violent people.

It is heartening that on October 02, 2023 Pakistan raised the precarious situation of Indian-illegally occupied Kashmir before the UN Decolonization Committee, known as the 4th committee, terming India's unilateral actions against Muslim majority as a modern-day colonial project. The most recent general debate on freedom from foreign occupation at New York UN Headquarters emphasized on solving the longstanding question of 17 Non-self-governing territories, more than six decades after UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.⁸ It is in the context, of the UNGA Resolution 1514 that was passed in the 15th session that terms foreign occupation and rule as a violation of human rights, affirms the right to self-determination and calls for an end to colonial rule.

Pakistan's Ambassador at the UN Munir Akram informed the UN committee members that India had perpetrated a vicious campaign of extrajudicial killings equivalent to ethnic cleansing of local Muslim majority in fake encounters, abductions and enforced disappearances of 13,000 young Kashmiri boys. "The entire genuine Kashmiri leadership has been incarcerated since 2019, where several leaders have died in Indian custody."⁹

India must be convinced by powers of world and the UN to create environment of dialogue as it cannot be allowed to continue demographic changes by ethnic cleansing and extra judicial killings and through pursuing a Hindu-majority agenda in a Muslim-majority region. It is against the very norms of UN charter and the human rights framework as well as clear UN resolutions that allow right to self-determination and dignity of mankind.

It is a huge tragedy that the indigenous and Muslim Majority regions of Kashmir and Palestine are facing the fall out of global geopolitical setting as both lie between varied civilizational fault-

⁷ Ashraf Qazi, "India and Kashmir: two views," *The Dawn*, May 19, 2023.

⁸ Anwar Iqbal, "Kashmir is India's modern day colonial project – Pakistan tells UN," *The Dawn*, October 04, 2023

⁹ Iqbal, "Kashmir in India," 2023

lines, Kashmir lies between the Muslim and Hindu civilization and Palestine between Middle Eastern and Western civilization. Yet the callousness of world powers and apathy of global conscience cannot justify the denial of right of self-determination of Kashmiris and Palestinians.

It goes without saying that durable peace in the Middle East can only be achieved through establishment of a viable, independent and contiguous State of Palestine, with the pre-1967 borders, with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital.¹⁰ Quite the same, lasting peace and prosperity of the world's most populated poverty ridden South Asia is impossible without giving the right of self-determination to the Kashmiri people. The UN, world powers and global conscience has to wake up and stand in unison for immediate end to the brutal colonial occupation of Kashmir and Palestine by the present fascist regimes in India and Israel.

¹⁰ Iqbal, "Kashmir in India," 2023

PARLIAMENTARY ROUNDTABLE**Members of Parliament endorse Charter of Education as roadmap towards inclusive and quality education**

Areebah Shahid, Executive Director PYCA
and
Ayesha Tariq Khan, Assistant Director (Research) PIPS

Islamabad, October 04, 2023: The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) organized a roundtable along with the collaboration of Society for Access to Quality Education (SAQE), Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) and Pakistan Youth Change Advocates (PYCA). The roundtable was attended by more than 27 participants including six Members of Parliament (sitting Senators and former MNAs), researchers, academics and members from civil society. The MPs who attended the roundtable discussion were Hon. Senator Farhatullah Babar, Hon. Senator Sana Jamali, Convener Senate Education Caucus, Hon. Senator Ms. Fawzia Arshad, Hon. Ms Shahida Akhter Ali, former MNA, Hon. Ms. Asiya Nasir, former MNA and Hon. Ms Shaza Fatima Khawaja, former SAPM and MNA.

Inaugural Session: The event started with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Qari Anees ur Rehman. In inaugural session, Ms. Zehra Arshad, Executive Director SAQE, explained the agenda of the roundtable discussion. She introduced the panelists to the audience. Articulating the event's primary objective, Ms. Zehra Arshad said, "We aim to elevate education among the top points in the country's political agenda. Our aspiration is for education reform and improvement to persist as a top priority, regardless of whichever political party assumes power in next year's general elections."

Mr. Muhammad Anwar, Executive Director PIPS, gave the welcoming remarks and stated the importance of inclusion of marginalized communities in the education sector. Reiterating the importance of the event, Mr. Muhammad Anwar said, "Today, we hope to set the stage for informed and focused discussions on education in the lead-up to the 2024 general elections. PIPS continues to play the role of bridge between the Parliament and the educationists, academia and members of civil society in order to strengthen public-friendly legislation and policy initiatives." He eulogized the efforts of PIPS Research wing to organize parliamentary roundtable on an imperative theme.

Session Two - Key Statistics on Education & Inclusivity and Education Budgeting: In the second session, Ms. Areebah Shahid, Executive Director PYCA, delivered a full-fledged presentation highlighting the challenges faced by children with disabilities in accessing quality education and recommended the strategies for promoting inclusive education and accommodating diverse learning needs. She also shared following key statistics in her presentation:

- i. Only 62.8% of the population (10 years and above) in Pakistan is literate, 73% boys and 51.9% of them girls.
- ii. 77% of the said population and 54% in rural areas (67% are boys and 41% girls) are literate.
- iii. Over 9,30,000 estimated drop outs in post-Covid times
- iv. 22.8 million children are out of school (OOS), that is 2nd highest in the world.

- v. 12 million girls are OOS while only 13% reach 9th grade
- vi. There are 180.2 thousand primary schools, 47.2 thousand middle schools and 34.2 thousand high schools; 7.1 thousand colleges and 3,000 degree colleges, 3700 technical and vocational colleges and 202 universities in the country.
- vii. The most estimated budget at federal levels was seen during PPP regime 2.75 of GDP in 2008, during PML N 3% of GDP in 2016 and 2.59% of GDP in 2018 by PTI – all falling well below the requirement of substantial financial resources to offer universal quality education.
- viii. In 2022, a total of 4253 cases of child sexual abuse, abduction, missing children and child marriages were reported.
- ix. At primary schools, 61% have electricity, 68% offer clean drinking water and 74% have sanitation that needs to be improved so that children have a safe and congenial school environment.

Mr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ali, Executive Director CPDI, presented key note on the political economy of education in Pakistan. He gave an overview of the current state of education in Pakistan and analyzed the budget allocations and spending on education to recommend that government must bravely tax rural landlords having huge agricultural landholdings, professionals like doctors, dentists and TV anchors and all exemptions given to elite in urban areas must be stopped including evasion of property taxes by owners of big houses in posh localities of capital city and metropolitans of Karachi, Lahore and Faisalabad. He reiterated that “Pakistan needs structural and pro-people reforms, whereby sufficient resources are generated, spared and raised to increase education budget to at least 5% of GDP. He said that “without substantially raising the education budget, it wouldn’t be possible to provide quality education to all of our children”.

Session Three - “Towards Quality and Inclusive Education - Perspectives/Remarks by the Parliamentary Party Representatives (Former and/or Present Honorable MPs): Mr. Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka, Director General (Research) PIPS, moderated the session. He said that key points of this session were to discuss the existing framework for education as a fundamental right in Pakistan and pitch the ideas, priorities and policies for education reforms in Pakistan. “This roundtable comes at a time when education indicators in Pakistan are witnessing a recession. It is now up to Pakistan’s elected representatives across a spectrum of parliamentary parties to uphold the constitutional pledge of free and quality education for all, ensuring that 10% quota for students from downtrodden backgrounds are admitted to reputed private schools” said Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka, Director General Research at PIPS. He also reiterated the need to guarantee merit in inducting the best teachers who should be trained and conferred with respect in society to ensure inclusive schools open to minorities, students with special abilities and downtrodden communities.

Honorable Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, former MNA and Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, joined the discussion virtually where she highlighted the important articles of the Constitution of Pakistan (25 and 25 A) ensuring free and compulsory education for all. She also mentioned achievements of the PML N government in the education sector that comprised of loans and scholarships to talented youth, setting up of a National Skills University to promote vocational trainings, lap top Scheme and Danish Schools in Punjab. She recommended that regular schools should enroll children with special abilities and transgenders in order to ensure inclusivity. She reiterated that skill’s training, technical and vocational training must be

mainstreamed from the primary school levels to prepare an educated as well as skilled-based human resource that is able to transform as future entrepreneurs recruiting others in future.

Honorable Senator Farhatullah Babar, Secretary General PPP, chaired the session. He highlighted the gaps in the teaching training and skill, which needs to be addressed and fill in and the quality of education should be improved. He highlighted that exclusivity of Non-Muslims is worse than exclusivity of other marginalized communities. Former Senator Farhatullah Babar stressed the need for a nationally owned political agenda for education, “In line with the spirit of Article 25-A of the Constitution, the political parties need to come together and develop a joint charter to combat the state of education emergency confronting Pakistan.” He suggested that there should be equal distribution of finances on the basis of education provision.

Honorable Ms. Shahida Akhter Ali, former Member of the National Assembly from JUI (F) and a teacher by profession, also highlighted the problems in the education sector of Pakistan and gave set of recommendations to solve those issues. She stressed the need to ensure transparency and merit in recruitment of teachers as the key to reform of education. Training opportunities and refresher courses at regular basis for all teachers can always keep the faculty motivated and enlightened on latest methodologies and challenges. Hon former MNA and Member of PAC Ms. Shahida Akhtar Ali pledged to have the agenda of inclusive and disability-friendly education included in their party manifestoes.

Honorable Senator Ms. Fawzia Arshad from PTI highlighted the need of a national consensus approach that can assure the continuity of education policies regardless of governmental changes. She also informed the participants about the policies taken up by PTI government regarding education. She suggested that there should be a balanced and single curriculum and gap should be reduced in the urban and rural schools’ education system. Senator Fauzia Arshad urged greater support for the private sector so it could support governmental efforts to make education more accessible. “Rather than creating hurdles for civil society organizations, the government should create ease for them so that they can play a more proactive role in education service delivery,” she said.

Honorable Ms. Asiya Nasir, former MNA, said that the able children should be sensitized about the disable children and for that, they should be enrolled in the same regular institutes. She suggested that civic education and promotion of ethical values should be included in the curriculum and private sector institutes should be regularized. Lamenting the state of education in Pakistan former MNA Ms. Asiya Nasir of JUI-F candidly acknowledged, “Public representatives have fallen short in their duties to uplift Pakistan's education system. We will play our role to ensure that JUI-F's manifesto reflects the urgency of diverting 5% of the GDP for education.”

Honorable Senator Ms. Sana Jamali, Convener Senate Education Caucus, suggested that Masjids should be used for educational purposes as they are empty from Fajar to Zuhr prayer and the house helps should be educated by the people who hire them. She said that “There is a need for joint political ownership and responsibility to address the issue of 25 million out-of-school children. A call to action to proactively tackle this critical educational challenge is urgently needed.”

Prof Dr. A.H. Nayyar and Dr. Bashir A. Shah gave recommendations in order to improve the quality of education, ensure inclusion of marginalized communities in education sector and pursuing better practices for understanding of democracy to the students. Ms. Zehra Arshad

discussed and explained the Charter of Demand to the panelists and requested them to include such points in their election manifestos. The salient charter of demands put forth are as under:

A. Education in Political Manifestoes in Pakistan

i. *Immediate measures to bring Out- of -School /displaced children back to school, with a special focus on marginalized groups such as girls, transgenders, minorities, and children living with disabilities:*

- a. Allocate 15% of BISP *Taleemi Wazaifa* for the inclusion of transgenders, minorities and children with disabilities in schools and 25% for education in climate-affected areas.
- b. Allocate 20% of Bait-ul-Mal funds to support the education of underserved children through conditional cash transfers.
- c. Divert 15% of donor assistance in education towards girls' education and 15% to rapidly restart education in flood/disaster-affected areas by utilizing existing infrastructure and initiating regular classes, avoiding the wait for school reconstruction.
- d. Increase development budget allocation as per the needs of the district and empower local government and school management committees for efficient utilization

ii. *Mobilize the strength of multiple stakeholders to build back better:*

- a. Short-term (6 months after coming into power): Develop a time-bound plan for the rapid and high-quality reconstruction of fully damaged schools, ensuring they are equipped with basic facilities. During this reconstruction period, establish temporary arrangements in non-affected schools to ensure uninterrupted education.
- b. Medium-term (12-18 months after coming into power): Continue the reconstruction efforts, focusing on partially damaged schools, aiming to complete their restoration within 12 to 18 months, including the provision of necessary facilities and infrastructure improvements.
- c. Long-term (24-36 months after coming into power): For schools that require more extensive rehabilitation, allocate 24 to 36 months to fully reconstruct and upgrade them, ensuring they meet modern educational standards and safety requirements while minimizing disruptions to students' education.
- d. Integrate school management and keep education on track as part of humanitarian response in national and provincial disaster management plans. This would include introducing programs for teachers and students in emergency preparedness and evacuation drills.
- e. Provide a nationally owned plan to mitigate learning losses through remedial learning measures for students affected by school closures during the pandemic and floods within the first 6 months of coming into power.

iii. Uphold the promise made in Article 25-A:

Develop a nationally owned plan for the phased implementation of Article 25-A as a justiciable fundamental human right of the constitution. Synchronize SDG-4 targets with the right to education (RTE) and localize indicators with efficient allocations to achieve targets by 2030.

iv. Budgetary allocation: By overcoming gaps in the existing system, adopting best practices from within and outside Pakistan, and mobilizing domestic and foreign resources to ensure:

- a. An annual increase in public investment in education as a percentage of the GDP from the current 2 percent to 4 percent immediately.
- b. Education departments should prepare a Gender-responsive education budget
- c. Establish inclusive and transparent systems to monitor and evaluate the progress of education policies and budgetary spending in line with Article 19-A (Right to Information Act).
- d. Devolve the Provincial Finance Commission to the district level to empower local government to incentivize

v. Safe Education:

Ensure that the educational institutions are safe to foster the growth of young minds irrespective of gender.

vi. Enhance the delivery of education:

- a. Relevant and regular teacher training programs in each province to improve teacher pedagogies, skills and knowledge, in specific subjects as well as the delivery of remedial learning after pandemics and floods disaster.
- b. Replace single-classroom, multi-grade teaching with the one-grade-one-teacher approach by increasing the number of schools, classrooms, and teachers in a phased manner that prioritizes the most underserved districts.
- c. Improve the student-to-teacher ratio across all educational levels to a maximum of 1 teacher for 30 students.
- d. Review and revise the current national curriculum to emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and right-based curriculum focusing on Maths and Science and IT and 21st-century skills; and promote a culture of lifelong learning, non-violence and national cohesion through inclusion and dialogue.

B. Process Level Recommendations

Introduce vocational and technical training programs in schools from grade 3 onwards, increase technical institutes and take students from Matric to technical and skill-based programs to generate a skilled workforce for the global market and industries by creating linkages.

vii. Make political and parliamentary processes robust:

- a. Institutionalizing inclusive and regular platforms at the district, provincial and national levels for open dialogues with communities and stakeholders. An annual calendar needs to be set and widely shared with the public to ensure continuity and active citizens' participation including women, minority genders, youth and ethnic and religious minorities.
- b. Data-driven decision-making accompanied by concrete milestones until the next general elections to make party pledges grounded in concrete steps.
- c. Availability of credible gender-segregated data that reflect district, provincial and national education status on Quality, Access, and inclusion as on budget allocations and spending Development of national and provincial dashboards capturing data is linked to education.

Concluding Session:

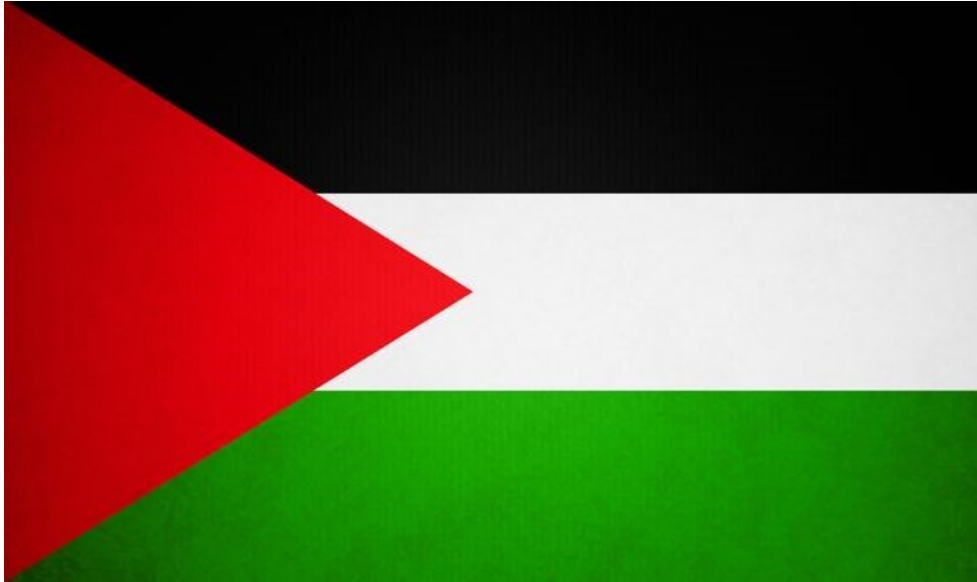
The Chair of the roundtable, Former Senator Farhatullah Babar while giving concluding remarks stressed on having Charter of Education, where every party should join hands for the sake of betterment of education sector of the country. He summarized that the key set of recommendations of the PIPS cross party Roundtable of Members of Parliament on Inclusivity in Education Reforms, which are as under:

- i. **Education budget must be doubled to raise it to 5% of the GDP** in all federating units to substantially reiterate education emergency to enhance literacy and improve of elementary, primary and high school education,
- ii. **Stipend for girls** in an incentive that can improve the enrolment ratio of girls especially with regards to out of school children from poor households,
- iii. **Transparency and merit in recruitments of teachers** is a must as any compromise led to catastrophic results as untrained and incompetent teachers recruited aren't sensitive to role of an educationist especially with regards to imparting inclusivity and respect of all strata of society and enhancing civic education amongst the youth,
- iv. **Effective on job training of teachers** on regular basis for improvement in teaching methodologies and orientation to new means of information in a digital world in addition to meeting the challenges of threats such as violent extremism, hate-speech and drugs etc,
- v. **Balanced and inclusive curriculum** that promotes appreciation of diversity as means of unity and inculcates dialogue to ensure inclusivity and national cohesion. Missionary schools have contributed immensely towards a national inclusivity-sensitive citizenry due to healthy interaction based on equality, fraternity and academic excellence amongst students hailing from different faiths, geographical and ethnic backgrounds,
- vi. **Allocations for local governments by provincial finance commissions:** It is imperative that local governments finally have a legislative protection whereby they are in position and get due budget and resources to run quality schools as they are in a much better position to take customized steps for enhancing enrolment as well as maintaining quality buildings, their maintenance and a monitoring of the working of schools in close coordination with the local school committees having representation of all stakeholders including parents and civil society,

- vii. **Skills trainings:** Students at school must be introduced to vocational training to develop specialization during school in a specific area in addition to basic orientation of IT and digital contemporary developments,
- viii. **Taxes on land holdings of elites is essential to enhance country's economic and financial health:** There should not be any exemptions to elite holding huge landholdings in rural areas not appropriately taxed in addition to professionals such as doctors, media men, dentists and lawyers who live in big mansions in federal and provincial capitals but avoid giving taxes and even justify cover under exemptions to avoid property taxes,
- ix. **Teachers vacancies should be filled:** Teachers vacancies should be filled in all federal and provincial governments on priority basis on merit to impart quality education, and
- x. **Education for people with disabilities:** Education for people with disabilities especially out-of-school children should be well-thought policy strategy.

The event was ended with a group photo. Mr. Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka, Director General (Research), presented the vote of thanks to Hon Members of Parliament, partner organizations, key note panelists, civil society experts and educationists for their wholehearted participation. He also acknowledged and expressed gratitude to CPDI focal person Ms. Nausheen Khurram and PIPS team Research comprising), Mr Muhammad Rizwan Manzoor, AD Research and Ms Ayesha Tariq, AD (Research) for untiring efforts to make the event a rousing success. He also appreciated PIPS IT and Administration wings for their traditional timely support and cooperation.





Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah Statement on Palestine Issue: The Muslims of the sub-continent had been compelled to condemn in the strongest possible manner the unjust and cruel decision of the United Nations concerning the partition of Palestine. The Muslims of the sub-continent are obviously reluctant to antagonize the US or any other country, but our sense of justice obliges us to help the Arab cause in Palestine in every way that is open for us."

(December 19, 1947 in an interview to Robert Stimson, BBC)



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