



François Michaud
Committee Clerk
Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights
Senate of Canada

Email: RIDR@sen.parl.gc.ca

June 5, 2020

Dear Mr. Michaud

Subject: RIDR Human Rights Hearing regarding Kashmir

We write to ask that once it is established for this session of Parliament, the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (RIDR) take steps as soon as possible to consider the concerning human rights situation for Kashmiris. We would ask specifically that RIDR move with urgency to schedule a hearing in this regard as soon as the Committee is appointed and able to resume its work.

Kashmiris have been consistently and systematically denied their rights for years and decades and international efforts to address this crisis have been largely ineffective. We draw your attention to the [July 2019 report](#) from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), as well as the OHCHR [report from April 2018](#). These reports give you a strong sense of many of the most urgent areas of focus for a hearing.

Under lock down since August 5, 2019, [thousands of Kashmiris have been jailed](#) and [tortured](#), and many [hundreds remain in detention](#). For decades, the brutalities and rights violations perpetrated on the people of Kashmir by state forces and institutions through the protracted conflict have included the enforcement of impunity laws, [sexualized violence](#), [torture](#), enforced [disappearances](#), criminalization of local resistance, extrajudicial executions and the burial of civilians in [unknown and mass graves](#).

Now there are COVID-related concerns arising as well. Since the March 30, 2020 passing of the domicile law, the police are issuing threats to arrest anyone [voicing dissent online](#). This is happening while Kashmiris are quarantined due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Slowing down the internet to 2G has had a direct impact on [health care professionals'](#) ability to access much needed online information during the pandemic. [Forty global rights groups](#) have demanded restoration of full 4G internet in Kashmir to no avail. In spite of various international bodies, including [Amnesty International](#), [scholars](#) and the Indian [Supreme Court](#) asking for the restoration of 4G services in Kashmir to mitigate COVID-19 risks, the government has [refused to comply](#).

On May 18, 2020 the Government of India notified the Jammu and Kashmir Grant of Domicile Certificate (Procedure) Rules. Since Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally disputed territory, this law, which entails forced transfer of populations and settlement is in contravention of international law, prohibited by Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and condemned by the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. With the introduction of the new Domicile policies, the indigenous populations of the region are under threat, and one step closer to genocide.

We urge the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights to take up the issue of Kashmir. We would welcome the opportunity to work with Committee members towards a hearing to consider this situation, and provide information to allow the Canadian government to take leadership toward human rights protection and a peaceful resolution for the people of Kashmir.

We thank you very much for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Neve', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alex Neve
Secretary General
Amnesty International Canada

On behalf of:

Robert Fantina, Board Member, Canadians for Peace and Justice in Kashmir
Karen Rodman, Executive Director, Just Peace Advocates
Rafiq Ahmed, Board Member, Friends of Kashmir, Canada
Taha Ghayyur, Executive Director, Justice for All
James Yap, President, Canadian Lawyers for International Human Rights