



**General Assembly**

Distr.  
GENERAL

A/HRC/9/NGO/55  
4 September 2008

ENGLISH ONLY

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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
Ninth session  
Agenda item 3

**PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL,  
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING  
THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

**Written statement\* submitted by Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation  
(HRCF), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is  
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 August 2008]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the  
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Jammu and Kashmir**

The economic, social and cultural rights together with civil and political rights, are part of integral, interrelated, interdependent and indivisible international human rights corpus enshrined in several important international legal instruments. Acts of organized violence by terrorists, mercenaries and extremists inflict extensive damage upon the society and economy besides thwarting the process of restoring peace and amity.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir have been victims of terrorism and extremism for over 18 years now. Indigenous traditions of harmony and composite culture have been sought to be displaced by the extremist religious ideology being enforced by organizations like *Tablighi Jamaat*, *Jamaat-e-Islami*, *Hizbul Mujahideen*, *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, *Jamaat-Ahle-Hadith* etc. But the people of Kashmir have demonstrated exemplary resilience while braving these odds.

Kashmir has defied the myth that violence and conflict stymie economic potential. Jammu and Kashmir has achieved the distinction of having the lowest rate of poverty in India. Only 3.7 per cent of rural Kashmiris and 1.19 per cent of city dwellers in Kashmir live below the poverty line as against 27.09 per cent and 23.02 per cent respectively in the rest of India. (See "Business Thrives Amidst Kashmir War", *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 April 2007). An average household in the State owns assets worth 10.67 lakh rupees, which is the highest in India, Kerala being in the second position with 7.62 lakh rupees only (see Rashid Ahmad, "Despite Terror, J & K Economy is Shining", *Hindustan Times*, 12 September 2007). The State has the lowest indebtedness at 4 per cent as compared to 42 per cent in Andhra Pradesh.

Literacy level is almost equal to the national average (65.4 per cent). The State boasts of four Medical Colleges, six universities, four Engineering colleges, 30 degree and 67 B. Ed colleges and tens of thousands of schools. Whereas over 15,000 students from north India come to Kashmir for seeking Bachelor's Degree in Education (B. Ed) (see *Indian Express*, 30 November 2007), about 300,000 Kashmiri Muslim boys and girls are at present working in various sectors/undergoing training in various technical and professional courses, in various parts of India (see Rashid Ahmad, "Looking for a Silver Lining Beyond Valley", *Hindustan Times*, 19 July 2008). It is worth mentioning that women seek higher and professional education and jobs both within and outside Kashmir, which is a marked deviation from the past practice. Amongst the 30,000 students who appeared in the year 2007 in tests for admission to different technical and professional courses, 16,000 were women. (see Rashid Ahmad, "Kashmir's Choice: Career over Family", *Hindustan Times*, 28 April 2008, p. 11)

In the employment sector, Jammu and Kashmir has the distinction of having the largest employee ratio amongst the Indian states. The State government employs about 410,000 people making it a ratio of over 40 government employees to every thousand persons. The total salary bill of the State adds up to about 1.5 billion US dollars, which accounts for 30 per cent of the annual budget.

The State's economy has sustained and shown a steady growth mainly due to improved production in horticulture, agriculture and handicraft sectors, in which 85 per cent population is involved. Now over 1.5 million tons of fresh and dry fruits are produced

annually, earning a revenue of about half a billion US dollars per year. Kashmir has also become the vegetable hub of north India, as it sends 150,000 metric tons of vegetables worth 200 crore rupees to north Indian states. (see Mir Ehsan, "Valley Becomes Vegetable Basket", *Indian Express*, 1 August 2008, p. 15)

There are several other success stories in Kashmir that effectively frustrate the nefarious designs of extremists. In spite of the *fidayeen* (suicide-bombers) attacks on 7 January 2005 and their continued threats, the Income Tax Department in Kashmir collected tax to the tune of over 32 million US dollars in 2006-07 as against a mere 2.5 million US dollars in 1999-2000. That the number of income tax payees in Kashmir has increased by 43 per cent, reflects the improvement in the economic situation in the valley.

The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla railway project with an outlay of about 2.6 billion US dollars, is not only opening up for the first time remote areas of the State, but also changing the lives of the people living en route by generating employment, education and healthcare facilities and all round development. It will have world's highest arch span rail bridge - 1.315 kms. long and 359 metres high. Srinagar Airport has been developed as an international airport with the capacity to handle about 1,000 passengers at a time. Notwithstanding the terrorist threats, about half a million tourists visited Kashmir in 2007.

Undaunted by the vicious atmosphere of hate and terror created by the *jihadis* in Kashmir, several young Muslims have made a mark at the national level in their respective fields. 22-year old Kashmiri, Merajuddin Wadoo has become the first footballer from Kashmir to be selected for India's senior National Football team. Wadoo kept his date with football in the midst of *jihadi* propaganda, bomb blasts and other forms of terrorist violence in Kashmir (See *Times of India*, 3 December 2005). Another success story is of 20-year old Abid Nabi from Kashmir, a promising fast bowler who has grown into a mature cricketer at the national level.

Qazi Tauqeer of Srinagar, a 20-year old Kashmiri Muslim boy from a lower middle class background, rose through the National Fame Gurukul Music Contest to become one of the youngest TV celebrities of India. Qazi received about 15 million votes from across India cutting through religious, caste and regional divides, saving him from eviction from the show 10 times and finally putting him on the top.

The first ever FM Radio Music Channel was started in Srinagar in early 2007 by Kashmiri professionals. That the Channel has become a hit throughout Kashmir valley and even across the LoC, speaks volumes about the yearning of the people to lead and enjoy normal zestful lives. Two young Kashmiri Muslim girls, Ms. Farah Khan (24 years) and Ms. Haya (23 years), the first radio jockeys from Kashmir, playing music and messages of love and peace, are helping in restoring the spirit of normalcy. It assumes importance in the wake of continuing extremist attacks on music and video shops. Despite threats from militant outfits including the *United Jihad Council*, thousands of Kashmiris enthralled themselves on 25 May 2008 at Srinagar in a musical concert by Pakistani rock band *Junoon*, clapping and dancing to the message of peace, love and harmony. (*The Hindu*, 26 May 2008, p. 15)

In yet another case, five Kashmiris, 24-year old Irfan Nabi (guitarist), his friend Bilal Ahmed (classical vocalist), Amit Wanchoo, (a Kashmiri Pandit lyricist), King Paul

Singh (a Kashmiri Sikh singer) and a Kashmiri Muslim girl, Mahmeet Syed, formed a music band, *Immersion*. Fed up with violence and suffering due to terrorism and bound up by the same suffocating circumstances, this band has been performing and singing about hope and peace in the valley. (See “Singing the Blues in the Valley”, *Times of India*, 4 May 2008, p. 20)

Similarly, in the field of literature, 82-year old Prof. Rahman Rahi, who is regarded as the greatest living poet of Kashmir, received the *Gnanpith*, the highest literary award of the country in 2007.

Another important milestone has been that a young Kashmiri Muslim lady surgeon Lt. Cdr. Wahida Prizm from Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir became the first Indian woman ever to command the Passing out Parade at Armed Forces Medical College in Pune on 13 March 2006, thus marking a paradigm shift from traditional practice of a male officer commanding the parade. Ms. Wahida is the daughter of a teacher Master Gulzar Ahmed, who was mercilessly gunned down inside his classroom by terrorists in 2001. It also marks the coming of age of gender equality in India’s uniformed services. Prizm now figures in textbook published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training in a chapter devoted to high achievers of contemporary India. Another Kashmiri Muslim, Mohammad Amin Naik’s elevation as Major General in the Indian Army early this year (2008), was celebrated with pride by Kashmiris.

Such instances only demonstrate the eagerness of the Kashmiri youth to march forward in diverse sectors of economic, social and cultural development without being intimidated by terror campaigns. However, there is need for greater accountability in respect of the utilization of funds, equitable distribution of resources, good governance, restoration of law and order and curbing corruption, so that the fruits of development are reaped by the common masses in all parts of the State. It, therefore, becomes necessary to ensure an atmosphere of peace, harmony and development.

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