

House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Hearing  
on  
“Jammu and Kashmir in Context”

November 14, 2019 - 2:00 p.m.  
2200 Rayburn House Office Building

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Submitted by:

Collective of Kashmiri Pandits

## **Statement from a collective of Kashmiri Pandits who reject the August 5 decision to revoke Kashmir's special constitutional status**

We begin this statement by noting our decision to maintain anonymity in the face of continuing reprisals against detractors by the Indian government as well as by state-affiliated groups.<sup>1</sup> These reprisals include, *inter alia*, the threat of revocation of visas and Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) privileges<sup>2</sup> as well as misogynistic cyberbullying and trolling<sup>3</sup>. Given this environment, a number of us have felt compelled against providing our academic and personal opinions on Kashmir at recent public briefings and hearings held under the aegis of the United States Congress. This is especially unfortunate given that we collectively represent decades of experience working on and in Kashmir, perspectives that would have certainly added to the congressional discussions about the recent developments in the region.

We would like to take this opportunity to enter for the record a statement of facts:

1. We recognize the vulnerability of minorities such as Kashmiri Pandits as well as all civilians in times of war and conflict.
2. We acknowledge that serious crimes occurred against Kashmiri Pandits in the 1990s, including massacres, sexual violence, as well as individual murders and attacks on property. These crimes have never been properly investigated or redressed by the Indian state or the Indian Supreme Court, resulting in impunity and a lack of justice or closure for the victims. We call upon an impartial investigation by international rights organizations of the Pandit displacement as well as all human rights crimes against residents of Jammu and Kashmir. We reject the Indian state's exploitation and exacerbation of the divides that have enabled discourses of competing victimhood.
3. We affirm the need for justice, truth and a democratic and peaceful solution, in keeping with international law and multiple UN resolutions, for all residents of Jammu and Kashmir. As state subjects, and as persons displaced by the conflict, Kashmiri Pandits have legal and political stakes in the future of Kashmir. We recognize that the prolonged lack of resolution has placed all communities in Kashmir in limbo. Indeed, the increased polarization reiterates the urgent need for a just resolution.
4. We wish to highlight the Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmiri Sikhs, and other faith communities who continue to live in Kashmir alongside their Kashmiri Muslim brethren and have done so for the past 30 years. We are committed to envisioning the Kashmir region as a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/pak-separatists-working-to-foil-centres-historic-decisions-on-jk-panun-kashmir-4647211.html>

<sup>2</sup> Aatish Taseer case: <https://scroll.in/article/943063/narendra-modi-and-the-unsurprising-politics-of-vengeance>; Christine Mehta case: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/christine-mehta-writes-on-how-she-was-deported-from-india-for-her-report-on-afspa/article7375878.ece>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cjr.org/analysis/the-kashmiri-narrative.php>

space that derives strength from its religious and ethnic plurality, both historically, today, and in the future.

5. We do not see Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits as an inevitable ‘Other’ to one another. We recall the stories and memories of our elders that spoke of love, friendship, and respect between Kashmir’s diverse communities. We deeply regret and are saddened by the fact that this has not remained the case for subsequent generations. We urge for a critical solidarity that can acknowledge each others’ pain and suffering, and can move forward with a vision for Kashmir that reimagines the idea of “community” between all residents of Jammu and Kashmir.

**Further reading by and about Kashmiri Pandit authors:**

- [Kashmiri Pandits Condemn Abrogation of Article 370 in Petition](#), Sushovan Sircar, *The Quint*, 10 October 2019.
- [Kashmiri Pandits may become an instrument of majoritarian forces](#), Interview with Former Air Vice Marshal Kapil Kak, *The Caravan*, 14 September 2019.
- [Celebrating the Article 370 decision is misplaced and vengeful: A Kashmiri Pandit student](#), Apurva Bamezai, *The Caravan*, 30 September 2019.
- [In Call to Fight for 'Identity', Seeds of a Counter-Narrative Among Kashmiri Pandits](#), Badri Raina, *The Wire*, 23 October 2019.
- [India must stop weaponizing the pain of Kashmiri Pandits](#), Nishita Trisal, *The Washington Post*, 22 August 2019.
- [‘This psychological barrier is made of barbed wire’](#), Interview with Suvir Kaul, *Live Mint*, 31 August 2019.
- [Kashmiri Pandits must reimagine the idea of return to Kashmir](#), Deepti Misri & Mona Bhan, Al Jazeera, 10 August 2019.
- [“What about the Kashmiri Pandits?”](#), Sanjay Kak, *Raoit*, 20 June 2018.
- [Kashmiri Pandits Are a Pawn in the Games of Hindutva Forces](#), Nitasha Kaul, *The Wire*, 7 January 2016.