

# The Kashmir Intifada: Solidarity with the struggle for national self-determination

Michael Gatter Mon, 26/07/2010 - 18:58

Michael Gatter

It was a one atrocity too many. 6 June news spread that the Indian army had executed in late April three young men ? Shahzad Ahmad, Riyaz Ahmad, and Mohammad Shafi ? claiming that they were "infiltrating militants" from Pakistan - a lie which nobody, not even the police themselves, believes.

On 11 June Indian paramilitaries from the Central Reserve Police Force fired tear-gas canisters at demonstrators at point blank range, hitting a 17-year-old Tufail Ahmad Mattoo in the head and blowing out his brains. Thousands joined his funeral procession the next day.

These events ignited an explosion by the Kashmiri people, living in oppression and fear under the occupation of the Indian armed forces. Several days of strikes and mass demonstrations have been called ? the latest on 13 July- the historic holiday known as ?Martyr?s Day?. (In 1931 21 Kashmiri Muslims were killed in an uprising against the then Hindu ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh).

While the Asia Times Online claims that two Islamist organizations - al-Badr led by Bakht Zameen Khan and Lashkar-e-Taiba ? have been involved in the clashes it is pretty clear that this is a spontaneous mass uprising.

Young Kashmiris are in the forefront of the street battles, throwing stones at security forces, blocking roads with burning tires to stop the Indian police etc. The state responds with lethal fire and kills and injures many people. As a result in June alone, at least 15 people have been killed in the clashes. Most of the clashes are in Srinagar, the summer capital of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Kashmiri protesters chant slogans like ?We want freedom? and ?India get out?. Banners at the protests read ?Quit Kashmir?, ?Go India, Go Back?, ?No India, No Pakistan, We Want Free Kashmir?. Similar placards have appeared in the capital city Srinagar.

One of the leaders of the movement, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who led thousands of demonstrators in Srinagar, declares: "Our protests and civil disobedience will continue until India withdraws its military and paramilitary soldiers from all populated areas".

Already the uprising ?as is now is now being called both popularly and in the media the Kashmir Intifada. Even the experts of the Indian ruling class have to admit the mass character of the uprising. The US Christian Science Monitor from 13 July quotes an article from B. Raman, former head of counterterrorism for India?s intelligence service: ?What we are witnessing in certain areas of Jammu & Kashmir is the beginning of an intifada.? He continues in terms that bring a whole new meaning to the word ?understatement?: ?The root cause is the growing perception among some sections of the youth that the security forces have been insensitive in performing their counter-insurgency duties and have been

adopting objectionable methods ? and using disproportionate force against the people.?

In 2008 Amnesty International sent a letter to the Indian prime minister claiming that ?grave sites are believed to contain the remains of victims of unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, torture and other abuses which occurred in the context of armed conflict persisting in the state since 1989. The graves of at least 940 persons have reportedly been found in 18 villages in Uri district alone.?

A Kashmiri NGO, the International People?s Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice in Indian-Administered Kashmir (IPTK), claims that Indian military occupation ?between 1989-2009 has resulted in 70,000+ deaths.?

## **History of national oppression**

This Intifada does not come out of the blue. It is only the latest explosion of the historic national oppression of the Kashmir people. As a result of the legacy of British colonialism and the reactionary partition of the Indian Sub-continent the ruling classes divided the area into India (pre-dominantly Hindu) and Pakistan (pre-dominantly Muslim). This led to reactionary wars in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999 and permanent tensions between the two countries.

In two of the three wars Indo-Pakistan wars Kashmir was the casus belli. This is because Kashmir is one of the worst examples of the reactionary division of India in 1947. The Kashmir people are divided into three states ? similarly to the fate of the Kurdish people. India presently administers approximately 43 per cent of the region including most of Jammu, Kashmir Valley, Ladakh and the Siachen Glacier. Pakistan occupies approximately 37per cent of Kashmir, mainly Azad Kashmir and the northern areas of Gilgit and Baltistan. In addition, China occupied 20 per cent of Kashmir after the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and the cession of the Trans-Karakoram Tract by Pakistan in 1963.

While about 3.6 million Kashmiris live in Pakistan, the majority live against their will in the Indian state Kashmir. This makes it the only majority-Muslim state in India. In the Kashmir valley Muslims form over 90 per cent of the population, but in Jammu ? about two million Hindus form a majority, and there is also a small minority Buddhists, mainly living in Ladakh.

## **The uprising in 1988**

There is a historic tradition of resistance of the Kashmir people against the Indian occupation. After a rigged election in 1987 this resistance turned into an armed uprising. In this uprising organisations like the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which was a petty-bourgeois nationalist movement with socialist rhetoric, played a leading role. However this uprising was brutally suppressed by the Indian army, which did cost the lives of at least 30.000 people.

Today the Indian state ? which by the way has a tradition of close collaboration and counter-insurgency training with the Israeli army ? has placed about 700.000 troops and 70.000 police forces for a population of roughly 8 million. This means that proportionately there are more occupation soldiers than in Afghanistan or Iraq ? about one for every ten Kashmiris!

A particularly sad result of the mass killing and repression is the fate of the so-called half widows. These are women whose husbands have been missing but have not been declared dead. As a result they are not allowed to re-marry. They often do not qualify for support from NGOs since there is no clause for half widows. Many of them have now organised themselves in associations to battle their dire conditions of impoverishment and social isolation.

The repression of the resistance led to the decline of the progressive JKLF and the rise of Islamist terror groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. While they certainly expressed in an obscure way the desire of a section of the Kashmir people for national self-determination, they often acted as marionettes of their sponsors, the Pakistan intelligence service ISI. Their infiltration from Pakistan into India led to the Kargil war in 1999.

However in the past few years new movements and protests have been built up. The Kashmir people are fed up with the military occupation, the tortures, killings, rapes, disappearances; mass graves and humiliation at check points. As a result mass protests were organised against the transfer of land to the Amarnath Shrine Board by the Indian government in 2008. Another subject of protest was the Shopian rape case last year. And when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Kashmir in June 2010 he was 'welcomed' by a general strike.

### **Solidarity with the Kashmir Intifada!**

The League for the Fifth International (LFI) and the Revolutionary Socialist Movement (RSM) in Pakistan are in complete solidarity with the Kashmir uprising against the Indian apparatus repression. The movement is absolutely right to call for demonstrations and general strikes.

However there are several questions which will determine if the struggle will end in victory. First there is the question of the political perspective of the struggle.

Some opposition groups have opted for negotiations with the Indian government and call for only the autonomy of Kashmir or an intervention by the 'international community'. Most of the Islamist armed forces support the separation of Kashmir from India and its accession to Pakistan. However there is a long tradition and still mass popular support for azadi (independence) - i.e. the separation of the Kashmir areas from both India and Pakistan and their unification into a separate sovereign state.

The demand for self-determination and, if freely and democratically expressed, independence, is a progressive demand, which all socialists should support, against Indian and Pakistani annexationists. Neither country's 'religious' or 'historic' claims should override the views of the people of Kashmir.

How can the masses decide if they want to live in a separate state or access to Pakistan? This is why socialists raise the demand of the election of a sovereign constituent assembly to decide on the future of Kashmir. This revolutionary democratic demand could be important to unite the masses for a common democratic goal.

However the question would immediately arise what should an independent Kashmir look like. Will a class of new class of capitalist and landlord oppressors rule it or will it be a free republic of the workers and peasants? Socialist obviously fight for the later perspective. Such a workers' and peasants' Kashmir of course could not last long in isolation.

For Kashmiri socialists fighting for the closest solidarity with their class brothers and sisters in India and Pakistan is decisive. For Indian and Pakistani socialists defending the right of Kashmiris to secede from the partitioning states if they so wish is the foundation of internationalism. If a free Kashmir is to resist the superior armed forces of the Indian and Pakistan state and prevent the country succumbing to isolation and economic underdevelopment. The goal must be to make the socialist revolution permanent - to spread the struggle to the masses in India and Pakistan. The aim must be a Socialist federation of the whole Indian Sub-continent.

One important lesson of the Palestinian Intifada is that the masses must organise themselves in action

committees in the towns and villages and decide over the perspective of the struggle. Only in this way they can avoid being led into defeat by petty bourgeois and bourgeois forces that lack any socialist perspective.

Finally the burning task of the hour is to build a revolutionary workers party as part of the Fifth International. Such a party will link with the class consciousness workers and youth and fight for most burning social and democratic demands of the hour. It will also try to give the movement a perspective of mass action, an indefinite general strike and an armed insurrection - a socialist revolution. It will fight against national chauvinists, political Islamists and Hindu chauvinists; all tendencies which undermine the international support and the spreading of the struggle to the Indian and Pakistani masses. This is the perspective the League for the Fifth International and the Revolutionary Socialist Movement are fighting for.

- ? For the immediate and total withdrawal of all Indian and Pakistani forces from Kashmir
- ? For the right of national self-determination for the people of Kashmir including the right to form an independent state
- ? For the election of a sovereign constituent assembly to decide on the future of Kashmir
- ? For the release of all the political prisoners of the Kashmir struggle
- ? For the right to return to their homes of all Kashmiris driven out by the Indian or Pakistani security forces
- ? For workers and peasant republics in India, Pakistan, Kashmir
- ? For a socialist federation of South Asia

---

**Source URL:** <https://fifthinternational.org/content/kashmir-intifada-solidarity-struggle-national-self-determination>