



## ISLAMABAD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Evacuee Trust Complex, Sir Aga Khan Road, F-5/1, Islamabad,  
Pakistan. Tel: + 92 51 9211346-49;  
Email: [ipripak@ipripak.org](mailto:ipripak@ipripak.org) Website: [www.ipripak.org](http://www.ipripak.org)

### IPRI Webinar Press Release

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*India is using COVID-19 as an iron curtain for its policy of progressive genocide in Occupied Jammu & Kashmir and for reinforcing its August 5, 2019 lockdown.*

While Pakistan seeks peace with its neighbor, we should emphasize on India and the rest of the world that we will not tolerate and stand by genocide in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). There are no cost free and risk-free options to stop genocide in IOJK, save Kashmir, and avoid war with India. Pakistan's nuclear deterrent is meant to deter war not pursue war. But, if the people of the Valley are threatened with genocide, as indeed they are, Pakistan must take bold measures.

Aug 5, 2019 has transformed Kashmir from a longer-term diplomatic challenge to an existential challenge for Pakistan. Modi's 'Anschluss' does not allow for incremental strategies. Pakistan must now do whatever it takes to ensure that it no longer remains an irresolute and self-imprisoned soft state that surrenders its *raison d'être*. Pakistan must strengthen its credibility. If that happens, India will, sooner or later, have to accept the reality that it can neither permanently crush the Kashmir liberation struggle nor successfully blame Pakistan for its inability to do so. Pakistan must develop options and take risks to ensure freedom and justice for Kashmir and to chart a course for peaceful coexistence with India.

These were the views shared by **Ambassador (R) Ashraf Jahangir Qazi**, Former Pakistan High Commissioner to India and Ambassador to US and China in an eloquent and thought-provoking webinar on *“Humanitarian Assistance amid the COVID-19 Lockdown in Indian-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK): International Response to the Clampdown”*, organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI).

Ambassador Qazi highlighted that it is not an exaggeration to define life in IOJK as purgatory

exacerbated by COVID-19. For Modi and his retinue, the pandemic provides the ideal opportunity to further execute their Hindutva designs of “absorb and annex” in the Valley – turning the Muslim majority into a minority. The situation in IOJK is desolate and spells terror as the Valley experiences not only acute shortage of manpower as well as inadequate infrastructure and personal protective equipment (PPE) but also internet facilities to access WHO guidelines on how to deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

Discussing the recent US Commission on International Religious Freedom report that designated India as a “country of particular concern” over its maltreatment of religious minorities mainly by “non-state actors”, Ambassador Qazi said that even Genocide Watch has issued a Genocide Alert for India Occupied Kashmir and called upon the United Nations and its members to warn India not to commit genocide in the territory. Genocide Watch has issued a Genocide Watch for Assam State, India, where millions of Bengali Muslims face losing citizenship status. However, he warned that India has not budged, and it will not until the Nazi-inspired Hindu state is blacklisted for institutionalized saffronizing of its minorities and the denizens of Kashmir. The exclusionary extremist narrative cannot be held accountable let alone defeated through issuing reports and merely showing “concerns”, he warned. “Pakistani response must operate on two tracks making the world see that first, Pakistan is working on all fronts to engage with India to discuss and resolve all outstanding issues, including climate change for peaceful co-existence; and second, that we do not seek zero sum solutions; and also at the same time categorically state that genocide will not be accepted in IOJK.

Ambassador Qazi lamented that for the inhabitants of the occupied territory, it is a case of triple jeopardy – military occupation, constitutional onslaught to alter the demographics and the emergence of an invisible enemy in the shape of COVID-19. As for BJP, the pandemic has become fitting pretext to justify communication blackout, restriction of internet services, confinement to homes ensuing deprivation of livelihood, and ultimately loss of identity for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Earlier **Acting President, Brig. (R) Raashid Wali Janjua**, welcomed the esteemed speaker to the webinar and said, “The Kashmir issue is dear to our hearts, the clampdown has compounded the misery of the hapless denizens, making it a double whammy for them.”