

STATEMENT RELEASED ON JULY 8, 2010

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It is a matter of grave concern and anguish that no sensitive measures have been taken by the Central Government in response to the ongoing deaths, injuries and killings in cold-blood of civilians in Srinagar and Anantnag districts of Jammu and Kashmir, including young girls and boys, most of them innocent, peaceful protestors, or even just bystanders. And consequently both North and South regions of the valley are on flame. To make matters worse, the Army, along with para-military forces, have been issued orders to shoot at sight to uphold the almost relentless curfew -- basically to block protests against the continuing spiral of non-stop and indiscriminate killings of innocent civilians. The presence of army and security forces dominates the Valley and reinforces the deep-rooted angst of people. The reality is that democracy is under severe strain and is almost absent in many parts in this state, despite an elected government backed by the Centre holding the reigns of power at Srinagar.

ANHAD and many other concerned civil society groups in India want the governments in the state and Centre to come out clean -- urgently and immediately -- and explain if this is indeed a democratic and constitutional method of handling a manifold and multiplying crisis in a highly sensitive region. Obviously, the establishment thinks that branding it as mere law and order problem and repression and killings would 'calm down' the situation as sensitive and grim as that of Jammu and Kashmir. This will be like choking tens of thousands of people into the silence of absolute suffering and blind rage. Will this violence ever stop, and will we ever find the root causes for a political solution based on consensus, understanding, mutual harmony and human rights?

Tuesday began with protests against one death which led to the second death and then suddenly, Srinagar was back under curfew. The cycle of violence has spun out of control all over again. Last week witnessed a similar series of killings taking its toll in Anantnag district where people were killed in clashes with security forces since they were not allowed to protest against the killings of civilians. This has become a tragic and vicious circle of hopelessness.

Instead of issuing any statement of sympathy or concern or wisdom, our highest offices of governance in the country, are only pushing for an escalation in the number of deployment of security forces. This clearly indicates the callous attitude of the governments in Delhi and Srinagar. Such acts of brutality are in complete violation of the law of the land and constitutional rights of the people that have resulted in mass outrage and alienation of large sections of the civilian population in Kashmir.

These are unarmed, non-violent citizens, who are being treated with such blatant and indiscriminate use of military force -- why? Is there no other way to negotiate with civil unrest? And what is the root cause of this civil unrest if not the brutalities executed by the police and para military forces? And what about cases of atrocities committed on people who are not even protesting?

There is no excuse for such cruelty. Despite repeated assurances by the central and state

governments of zero tolerance towards human rights violations, the fact remains that little has been done to punish those responsible for such heinous and gross violations. This organised insensitivity and vacillation to act firmly against such elements is bound to put a question mark on the credibility of the State and its track record in terms of human and democratic rights of the people, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Mere rhetoric and institution of official enquiries is not enough to restore the shattered and shaken confidence of the people. It is imperative that the central and state authorities take firm and visible action against those responsible for unleashing this brutish violence on innocent people. Any delay will only compound the alienation and anger of the people -- resulting in irrefutable damage to the peace process in the Valley and elsewhere in the state.

ANHAD expresses serious concern over the absolute antipathy and lack of political initiative displayed by the UPA-led central government in response to the situation in the valley. They should learn some lessons from history. People cannot be won over or suppressed at gun point. Certainly, the people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve a more rational, humane, visionary and sensitive response from the Indian State.

We demand from the Central and the State governments to:

- Take immediate action to prevent further loss of life and property
- Put an end to the violence perpetrated by the security forces with immediate effect.
- Immediately appoint an independent and impartial time bound Commission of Enquiry to look into the killings of peaceful civilians & human rights violations
- Initiate an inquiry into instances of attacks on ambulance services
- Ensure security of the journalists both of local and national media
- Ensure freedom of expression and press
- Immediately start a political dialogue with various stake holders

Endorsed By:

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