

Forum for Awareness of National Security (FANS), New Delhi

Concept Note for

International Webinar on

Pakistan Occupied Jammu-Kashmir & Gilgit Baltistan

Changing the Discourse and Prospect

31 October 2020

Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) are under the occupation of Pakistan since 1947. Recently, in May 2020, political and human right activists from Gilgit-Baltistan and PoK called Pakistan's move to hold election in GB illegal and unconstitutional. The government of Pakistan or its judiciary has no locus standi to occupy the territories forcibly and illegally. Political and human right activists from Gilgit-Baltistan and PoK also raised human rights issues about Gilgit, Hunza and Baltistan. The Pakistan government has banned several groups in recent time who voice an opinion against Pakistan atrocities in PoJK and other regions.

PoJK which consists of "Azad J&K" (AJK) and Gilgit Baltistan (G-B), was acquired by Pak Army through armed action in 1947. AJK has been given status of a 'country' by Pakistan with a President and PM. However, it is neither a country nor a province. 'AJK' President and PM only enjoy titular powers and strategically important areas are under the direct control of Pakistan. Violence has been used against the population of PoJK who have dared to raise their voice against the injustices of rulers. Cases of enforced disappearances, murder, detentions, custodial deaths and police torture of civil rights activists/local political parties/journalists are rampant in the region.

Both in PoJK and GB, local grievances are mostly blocked, and media censorship is imposed to silence the voice of the public. Agitations against poor living conditions, denial of basic human rights, property rights and diversion of funds continue but have not been widely reported due to media blackout policy of Pakistan in the occupied territories. Local political leaders including journalists have been kept under detention and are serving jail sentences or detained without charge. Pakistan has changed the demography in Gilgit and Baltistan. There have been protests against exploitation of PoJK land for China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects that primarily aims to benefit Pakistan with no benefit to the region.

Government of Pakistan ensures clear blackout of ground realities for PoJK and has gradually eased out foreign NGOs and human rights organisations from the region to thwart international scrutiny of continuing violations by the Pak forces. The Hong Kong based 'Asian Human Rights Commission' in a report (August 2016) accused Pakistan of using extreme brutality and torture in PoJK. It reported that excessive use of police force was a regular phenomenon which had resulted in large scale resentment among the residents of the region.

Several G-B based organizations and Gilgit-Baltistan Trade Union (GBTU) organized protests on October 5, 2018 against GBO 2018 alleging violation of Human rights of residents of G-B. The protest was organised at Skardu, Gilgit, Chilas and Islamabad by Awami Action Committee (AAC) and Gilgit-Baltistan Trade Union (GBTU). This Shia

dominated region of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is being subjected to settlement of Sunni population with theological autocracy. Even it has not the little autonomy & democracy. In the Pakistan National Assembly the representatives of this region are also neither acknowledged nor nominated as a part of the Pakistan National Assembly.

In view of present situation in PoJK and GB, this webinar examines the developments that consolidated a sense of insecurity amongst the people in this region.