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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Community Human Rights and Advocacy Centre (CHRAC), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 August 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Youth without Education: A new Normal in Indian Administered Kashmir

When the civilized nations of the world are trying their best to fight out the pandemic of COVID-19, here on earth is a beautiful piece of land called Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir, where people are deprived from 4G Internet and their identity through illegal abrogation of Article 370 by Indian government with the sole purpose of destroying their legitimate right to self-determination which is guaranteed by United Nations. Unending suppression on civilian population through obscure laws, gagging media, unleashing unprovoked firing on civilian population on Line of Control (LoC), harassing female gender and creating communal rifts and division is the well-known and well exposed strategy of Indian forces. This has left unprecedented impact on all the facets of society. More importantly, it has massively impacted young generation of Kashmir which has further internalized resistance, nurtured hatred against Indian occupational forces and above all entire generation has turned their backs against Indian occupational forces. A nation with more than 45 percent people suffering from mental distress, as stated by the Médecins Sans Frontières or Doctors Without Borders (MSF), this blatant occupation has further paralyzed them due to deliberate closure of education system.

At the time when the world is reeling from the effects of COVID-19, and almost entire world has shifted to online teaching learning, everything in Indian Administered Kashmir is under lockdown under the pretext of COVID-19. It appears that, India's government is using COVID-19 as a pretext and shield to keep the valiant young Kashmiri people ignorant and illiterate. At the time of pandemic, when global institutions are thinking to help and support each other in not only fighting COVID-19 pandemic, but also keep the education wheel going, India has seized all the possible chances of learning for Kashmiris. This perennial clampdown and suppression have taken deep toll on education. Though schools are closed, but Indian government has suspended 4G internet for Kashmiris, which made online teaching impossible. It has been more than 12 months in Indian Administered Kashmir when the infinite lockdown was forcibly imposed on people to stop educational activity which was further made miserable after COVID-19 crises. To add fuel to the fire, Indian government also suspended cell phones which crippled life of people. The systematic targeting to affect education of student is evident as indefinite curfew is new normal in Kashmir. G N Var, President of Private Schools Association and Coaching Centers Association in Indian Administered Kashmir, mentioned the deplorable state of education which has plagued its society as around 650,000 students are studying in private schools before the Indian clampdown on August 5, 2019. Now their educational future besides the political, is the victim of Hindutva mindset of Bhartiya Janta Party (ruling party of India) which believes in ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Muslims. He said that "I think Kashmir is the only place in the world where 2.7 million hapless children do not have access to knowledge and information. Can there be any injustice bigger than this?"

The primacy and sanctity of educational institutions is paramount and history is witnessed to this even during World War I and II where people continued their education, despite war and enemies follow certain ethical practices to safeguard them. Contrarily, Indian army has seized the already dilapidated governmental schools and colleges' infrastructure to station troops and use it as torture cells. A place where even before August 5, 2019, free speech was unpardonable crime; it never numbed the conscience of oppressors when they harass school going girls, humiliate them in the vicinity of schools leaving lasting emotional and psychological trauma. Indian reputed newspapers also mentioned in past that alone in two districts of Indian Administered Kashmir, Rashtriya Rifles occupy 20 schools, out of which 14 are either primary or secondary schools. Message is clear and open; Indian forces are applying a tacit strategy by enforcing fear, denying education, gagging media, blocking 4G internet services, denying other communication mode to subjugate young Kashmiris from their right to self-determination.

The policy of disrespecting international laws, conventions and obligation is never ceased to occupied valley only but people living on Line of Control (LoC) also became the worst victim of Indian unprovoked firing. Generations of young children on Neelum Valley, and other areas near LOC in Azad Kashmir, have lost their parents, and could never attend school or

colleges due to Indian firing. Most of their educational institutions are destroyed due to Indian firing, and shelling and remaining are under direct threat of Indian forces. Sadly the plight of people of disputed Jammu and Kashmir seems unending and infinite until the International community intervenes to help Kashmiris attain their right to self-determination.
