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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 International Muslim Women's Union, 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.

[17 August 2020]

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

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Children and Women denied their basic rights

For many decades, children in Indian Administered Kashmir grow up caged and under the shadow of a weapon. As the parents of many of them go missing, they are also forced to assume the responsibility of caregivers for their siblings. The strain on social structures due to the loss of family environment, safe spaces, education, and health facilities severely traumatized many of them and rushed their childhood away. Gowhar Geelani, in his recent book *Kashmir Rage and Reason* says children in Kashmir learn terms like “custody killing”; “catch and kill”; “torture”; “interrogation”; “detention”; and “disappearance” — internalizing a vocabulary, they should not be privy to otherwise.

What kind of world can such children look forward to if they have to live in a constant fear of being picked up for an unknown crime and taken to an unknown destination? One 11-year-old boy in Pampore, a town in western Kashmir, told the researchers he was beaten up during his detention from August 5 to 11, and that there were boys even younger than him in custody. And pain of hundreds of children remained untold due to fear of further sufferings and torture after registering the brutality of armed forces in Indian Administered Kashmir. Unfortunately, the present generation of Kashmiri children has been the hardest hit. They have known nothing but conflict. For the past decade, huge protests and clashes erupted. Many young people have seen friends killed, maimed, or hauled off by Indian security forces. Their schools are constantly closed for months and now more than a year.

Various researchers have stated the several issues faced by children in Indian administered Kashmir. Among them the major two are violence and lack of Education, especially post August 5, 2019. As stated by a report created by the Indian economists and activists, boys have been abducted and girls and women have been molested during midnight raids by the security forces. Additionally, a new report that details the extent of violence against children in Indian Administered Kashmir suggested that the armed forces had directly targeted the children. The report further detailed the various ways in which children (defined as age 1-17) have been victimized over the last 15 years—killing by the armed forces, sexual violence, illegal detentions, occupation of schools and violence against students.

In the nutshell, Kashmiri children have become the “pawns” in the political game where the government wants to punish those protesting against its authority. In June 2020, a picture of a toddler lying on the dead body of his grandfather sparked outrage in Indian administered Kashmir. Iram, mother of that child, said that this incident has traumatized his son. She said, “This picture will haunt him for the rest of life.” She further said, “He saw his grandfather’s dead body and men in uniform all around him. He gets scared now when he hears the word ‘Police’, or he sees policemen.”

Adding to existing knowledge, mental health professionals of Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences-Kashmir (IMHAN-K) have warned of an “epidemic of psychological disorder” among children exposed to ‘rare, complex, ongoing trauma’ due to prolonged conflict in the region. IMHAN-K have already seen around 200 mental cases among students in the past 12 months, which were by frequent crackdown by forces, encounters and funerals in Indian Administered Kashmir. Moreover, according to IMHAN-K data 65-70% of these 200 cases of the affected children were from South Kashmir and around 80% belonged to pre-adolescence and early adolescence age groups.

Many children from South Kashmir talked about the presence of security personnel as a trigger for anxiety, irritability, and anger. Many were having episodic sightings of trauma, fright, scary dreams, and sleep disorders. Doctors at IMHAN-K warned that there were chances of “maladaptive coping” among such children. The development trajectory of such children gets affected as a consequence and it may lead to depression and drug abuse. Additionally, Khurram Pervaz, a Kashmir based human rights activist stated that the children in Kashmir are witnessing two types of violence. The first type is when they are directly affected by killing, torture, arrest; the second is when they see their families suffering. Pervaz added that these children cannot lead a normal life and stated, “Their life is shaped by the sense of injustice and the tendency to accept violence increases with time. All these things have a negative impact on their mental health. In its report, the United Nations said it has verified the killing (8) and maiming (7) of 15 children (13 boys, 2 girls), between the ages of

1 and 17, by or during joint operations of the Central Reserve Police Force, the Indian Army (Rashtriya Rifles) and the Special Operations Group of the Jammu and Kashmir Police.” Sixty-eight children between the ages of 9 and 17 have been detained by Indian security services in Jammu and Kashmir on national security-related charges, including 1 for actual or alleged association with armed groups, according to the report.
