



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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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 Réveil communautaire d'assistance aux victimes, 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.

[16 August 2024]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **A Cry for Freedom: Pakistan's Oppression of the Indigenous People of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir**

The echoes of protest have been ringing loud across the frozen landscapes of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, a region that has been caught in the crosshairs of Pakistan's oppressive policies for decades. As the world watches on, a mass movement is unfolding, fueled by the collective anguish of a people whose basic rights have been trampled upon for far too long. At the heart of this uprising lies the demand for autonomy, a cry for self-determination that has been echoing across the valleys and mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, for generations. The people of this region, with their rich cultural heritage and deep-rooted connection to the land, have seen their aspirations consistently crushed under the weight of Pakistan's rule.

The Pakistani state's treatment of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, has been a saga of exploitation, discrimination, and blatant disregard for the will of its indigenous populace <sup>1</sup>. The region's constitutional status remains a murky enigma, with Pakistan refusing to grant it the recognition it deserves within the country's legal framework. This deliberate ambiguity has facilitated the systematic erosion of the region's autonomy, paving the way for economic, social, and political marginalization. <sup>2</sup>

The resolute spirit of the indigenous people of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, has been on full display as their mass protests enter a new phase of escalation. Undeterred by the freezing temperatures and the challenges posed by the Pakistani authorities, thousands have taken to the streets, marching from far-flung districts towards the regional capital of Gilgit. <sup>3</sup> This convergence of voices from across the region underscores the depth of discontent and the unwavering determination to have their grievances addressed. The demands echo a cry for basic rights – the restoration of subsidized wheat prices, the withdrawal of oppressive taxes, and the provision of land ownership that has long been denied. But at the core of this movement lies a deeper yearning – the quest for constitutional recognition, genuine autonomy, and a stake in the region's vast natural resources. As the rallies swell, the Pakistani government's attempts to placate the protesters through negotiations have fallen on deaf ears, reflecting a profound mistrust born from decades of broken promises and systematic marginalization.

The demands of the protesters are a poignant reminder of the basic rights that have been denied to them. From the restoration of subsidized wheat prices to the provision of free electricity from their own resources, the calls for justice echo the deep-seated grievances of a people who have been deprived of their rightful share of the region's bounty. Moreover, the demand for a Constituent Assembly to replace the ineffective Gilgit-Baltistan (Pakistan-Administered Kashmir) assembly underscores the lack of genuine representation and self-governance that has plagued the region for decades. The people's voices have been silenced, their aspirations ignored, and their futures held hostage by a system that prioritizes control over empowerment.

But the struggle for indigenous rights in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, extends far beyond the current protests. It is a battle against the systematic oppression that has unfolded since the fateful events of 1947, when the region became a pawn in the geopolitical chess game between India and Pakistan. Pakistan's actions in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, have been marred by deliberate attempts to undermine the region's cultural and demographic fabric. The settlement of non-locals, often from the Sunni majority, has been a tactic employed to dilute the influence of the region's Shia and Ismaili communities, sowing seeds of discord and division where unity and harmony once thrived.

The economic exploitation of Gilgit-Baltistan's (Pakistan-Administered Kashmir) resources has been another hallmark of Pakistan's policies. While the region boasts immense hydropower potential, its people have been left to grapple with prolonged power outages, as the electricity generated is siphoned off to serve the interests of the central government and its allies.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), touted as a catalyst for development, has in reality become a tool for further subjugation. Land grabbing, displacement, and the influx of Chinese workers have exacerbated the sense of disenfranchisement among the local population, who watch helplessly as their ancestral lands are appropriated for projects that offer little in return.

The ongoing protests in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, are not merely a reaction to immediate grievances; they are a manifestation of decades of accumulated frustration, a cry for justice that can no longer be ignored. The resilience and determination of the protesters, braving freezing temperatures and the threat of retaliation, are a testament to the indomitable spirit of a people unwilling to surrender their rights and dignity. As the world bears witness to this struggle, it is imperative that the international community takes a stand against the blatant human rights violations unfolding in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir. The principles of self-determination and indigenous rights must be upheld, and Pakistan must be held accountable for its actions.

The path forward is not an easy one, but it is a necessary journey towards justice and empowerment. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, deserve the right to shape their own destinies, free from the shackles of oppression and exploitation. Their voices must be heard, their demands acknowledged, and their aspirations respected. The time has come for the Pakistani state to confront the harsh realities of its policies and to embrace a new paradigm of inclusivity, transparency, and respect for the fundamental rights of all its citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, or geographical location. The struggle for indigenous rights in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, is not merely a local issue; it is a clarion call for the global community to stand up against the erosion of human dignity and self-determination. As we bear witness to this historic moment, let us lend our voices to the chorus of protest, amplifying the cries for freedom that echo from the peaks of the Karakoram and resonate across the world.

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1) <https://globalkashmir.net/opinion-the-miseries-faced-by-the-people-of-gilgit-baltistan-and-pakistan-occupied-kashmir/>

2) <https://rsilpak.org/2022/the-gilgit-baltistan-constitutional-crisis/>

3) <https://www.dawn.com/news/1809378>