

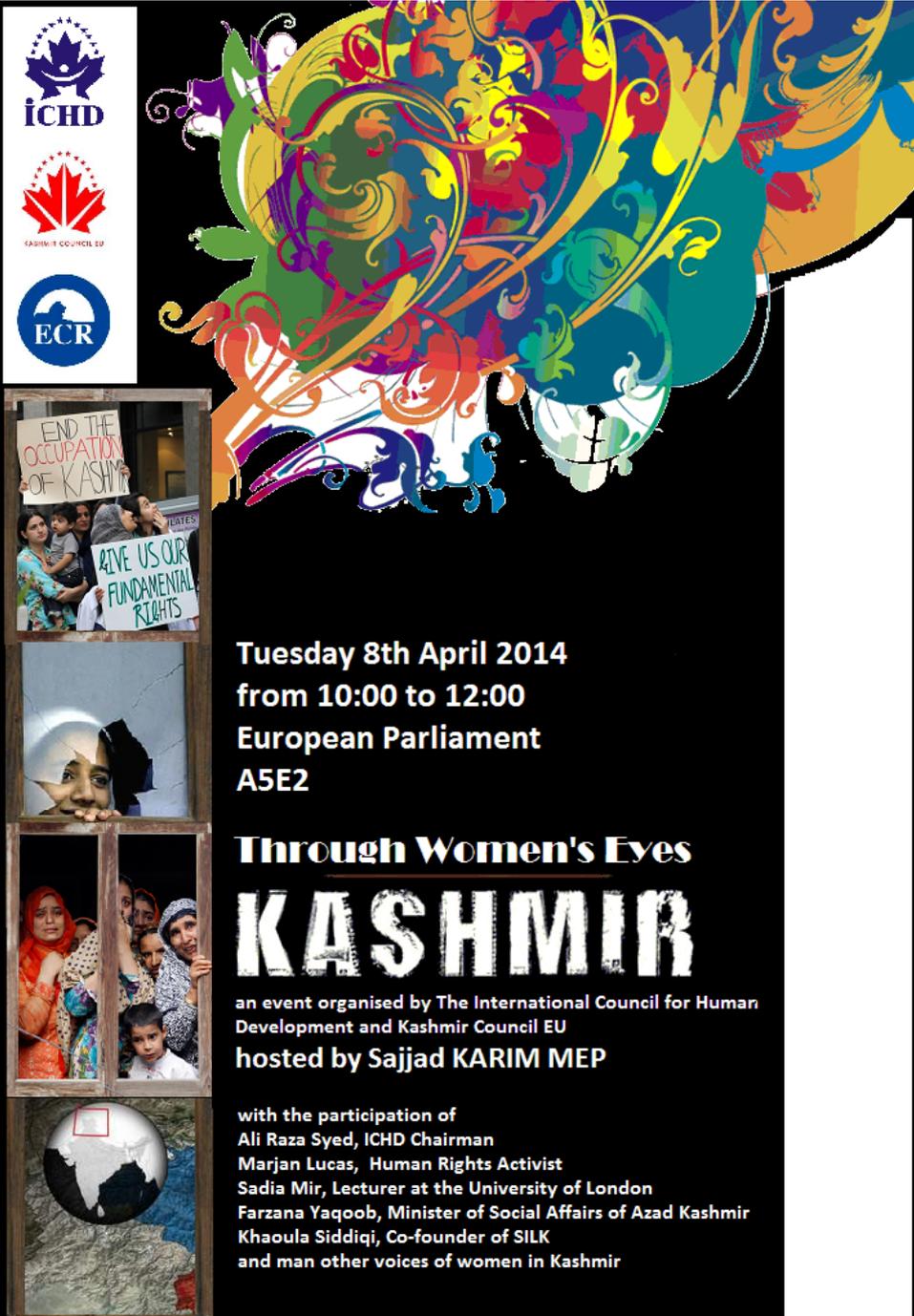
Kashmir Conference in the European Parliament

# 'Women in Conflict: Kashmir through women's eyes'

REPORT

Brussels, 8 April 2014

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**ICHHD**  
KASHMIR COUNCIL EU  
**ECR**

END THE  
OCCUPATION  
OF KASHMIR

GIVE US OUR  
FUNDAMENTAL  
RIGHTS

**Tuesday 8th April 2014**  
**from 10:00 to 12:00**  
**European Parliament**  
**A5E2**

**Through Women's Eyes**  
**KASHMIR**

an event organised by The International Council for Human  
Development and Kashmir Council EU  
hosted by Sajjad KARIM MEP

with the participation of  
Ali Raza Syed, ICHD Chairman  
Marjan Lucas, Human Rights Activist  
Sadia Mir, Lecturer at the University of London  
Farzana Yaqoob, Minister of Social Affairs of Azad Kashmir  
Khaoula Siddiqi, Co-founder of SILK  
and many other voices of women in Kashmir



## ‘Women in Conflict: Kashmir through women’s eyes’

Brussels, 8 April 2014

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*“Women in Conflict: Kashmir through Women’s Eyes” was a Conference designed to shed light on the role and condition of women in Kashmir. It brought together prominent Kashmiri activists and intellectuals to discuss the latest situation concerning the particular issue of women’s human rights in the occupied Kashmir (IOK). MEP Sajjad Karim hosted the event, which took place in the venues of the European Parliament in Brussels. Co-host and organiser was Ali Raza Syed, Chairman of ICHD and Kashmir Council EU.*



*Quoting Ali Raza Syed: ‘A women’s eye is the eye of the soul. It is the third eye of a society that can see the deepest realities and can foresee the future. The colours of the eyes of the women of any nation reflect the colours of the collective soul. The women of Kashmir have chosen to come out for their rights and freedom because they see no hope for their generation under the tyranny of a ruthless power. This way, you see two colours in the eyes of the women, the colour of sadness and the colour of commitment. And today’s conference shall give you many opportunities to see these two colours’.*

### Guests who spoke on the occasion:

**Sajjad KARIM**, MEP host of the event

**Ali Raza SYED**, Chairman ICDH & Kashmir Council EU

**Khaoula SIDDIQI**, Co-founder of SILK

**Shamila MAHMOOD**, Senior Legal Consultant

**Farzana YAQOOB**, Minister of Social Affairs in the Government of Azad Jammu Kashmir

**Sadia MIR**, Lecturer at University of London

**Jolanda BRUNNEKREEF**, Gender & Diversity Expert

**Danielle CARON**, MP Brussels Parliament

**Marjan LUCAS**, Human Rights Activist (moderator)

## Preface

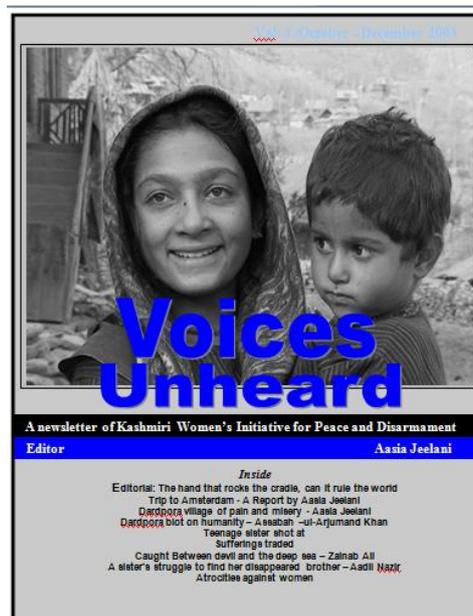
This report summarizes what has been said and done on the occasion of the Conference 'Kashmir Through Women's Eyes', of April 8<sup>th</sup> 2014, in Brussels - capital city of the European Union.

Next to a report of the contributions of speakers and debate in the Conference of April 8<sup>th</sup> 2014, I will enclose quotes from other female speakers and writers to what had been raised by speakers and audience in the Conference. These texts are marked in grey and serve to elaborate about topics raised by the panelists of April 8<sup>th</sup> 2014, and the theme of the Conference 'Kashmir Through Women's Eyes'.

In doing so, 'only' female writers (researchers, journalists, writers, civilians, a.o.) are quoted. An impressive amount of research and media coverage is done 'through women's eyes' on past and present of the Kashmir conflict. Kashmiri women know since decades that it is important to be heard and seen, organize and empower themselves to be able to raise awareness of status quo and to change it for a future in freedom and dignity.

For example: human rights activist Aasia Jeelani, dramatically killed when monitoring election 2004, founded the periodical 'Voices Unheard (<http://voicesunheard1.wordpress.com/>) together with other brave young women as Afsana Rashid, Assabah Arjamund Khan, Zainab Ali and others. Female filmmakers spread the message via film and video-productions, like Shabnam Ara with her film 'Waiting' (<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/457/Waiting--->). In India and Pakistan, women felt solidarity with Kashmiri women via a gender perspective and reached out for Asian wide solidarity, as e.g. Dr. Uma Chakarvarti and Dr. Seema Kazi (from Delhi), expresses in her work. A lot of Kashmiri as well as non-Kashmiri female students focused in their studies on Kashmir and visited, if possible, the region for their research and published their thesis, articles and books. Globally, in Kashmiri Diaspora and in non-Asian international community many women felt the Kashmiri struggle for *Azadi* needed a contribution by - and specific focus on - women as actors, as victims, as living resources of experience and wisdom. And as agents for change.

Marjan Lucas, Nijmegen 5 May 2014



# Women in Conflict: Kashmir through women's eyes

Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2014

Opening of the session & welcome by **MEP Sajjad Karim**

Introduction of guests by ICHD & Kashmir Council EU - **Ali Raza Syed**

10.15 hrs

Contributions by guest-speakers - moderator: **Marjan Lucas**

**Sadia Mir:** international diplomacy and policy making, what can be in it for women

**Khaoula Siddiqi:** impact on the conflict on children, on women & voice of next generation Kashmiri

**Shamila Mahmood:** water management in a context of conflict

**Danielle Caron:** advocate of an ongoing global movement for women's rights

**Jolanda Brunnekreef:** women in Srinagar seek to unite through arts despite odds

**Farzana Yaqoob:** the ambition to get beyond talking and get to implementing wishes and words

11.45 hrs

Contributions by **MEP Phil Bennion (UK)**, **Mohammad Siddiq KIANI** (President of Free Kashmir Organization Germany, Berlin), **Nasim Haider GEO-TV**, **Nadeem Raza Boll-TV** and others in **audience**

Q & A with the audience - moderator: **Marjan Lucas**

12.30 hrs Closure of the session, and meeting with **MEP Nicole Sinclair (UK)** and others



## **Sajjad Karim – European Parliament a arena for a better future**

For MEP Sajjad Karim, these weeks of April are extreme busy ones, more busy than all days and weeks of his work in European Parliament in last many years. We live in the pre-election time in these weeks of April: in May 2014, the European citizens will elect a new European Parliament which will be on duty for five years, so until Spring 2019.

## **Ali Raza Syed - a global coalition for Kashmiri women's rights**

*'I am proud to welcome my sisters. I am glad to see Ms. Farzana Yaqoob as daughter of Kashmir born in freedom but seeing the pain of her sisters in IOK. Am sad however to see my other sisters, daughters of Kashmir cut off from their roots. I am delighted to see you, European sisters in our panel today and all of you in the audience. I hope events like these will encourage a global coalition for Kashmiri women's rights'.*

## **Marjan Lucas - conflict, gender and solidarity**

**Marjan Lucas worked in international partnership with Kashmiri human rights- and civil society activists on the ground on both sides of LOC (Srinagar/Baramulla and Muzaffarabad/Mirpur), and was longtime (from 2002 onwards) lobbyist in Western diplomatic circles and political fora.**

*'Since my first Kashmiri-conference in 2002, I am used to Kashmir Conferences in which the majority of speakers are male – politicians, diplomats, former army men, former commanders, writers, journalists, lawyers, etc. I am delighted this Kashmir Women Conference today in European Parliament is organized and I hope many more will follow. Thank you MEP Sajjad Karim and Ali Syed Raza sahib for creating the space to speak out on Kashmir 'through women's eyes'.*

*The latest one in which I participated was in The Netherlands, in September 2013, when LUCIS, the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (see <http://hum.leidenuniv.nl/lucis/>), had organized a Kashmir-seminar. That seminar was a very nice event indeed. It was an all women forum, amazing...The speakers were, except myself, all Kashmiri and Indian, the moderator/professor was Sri Lankan, the PhD student who organized it a brilliant young man from Srinagar, Kashmir. The audience covered a variety of people (ca. 50), students, businessmen, professors, friends, etc. from various nationalities. Kashmiri, Pakistani, Indians, people from Bangladesh, Netherlands, Germany, Korea, a.o. were present.*

*The women in the forum (all academics/professors) were very eloquent and outspoken in their statements: I was a bit nervous and was expected and prepared to be harshly criticized by co-panelists and audience, as in former days when debates even resulted in physical threat - but this time I heard my co-panelists expressing views for which I was banned in the past for over five years: the speakers openly condemned military repression and Black Laws and strongly criticized policy of Government of India on Kashmir. They all shared the strong sentiment that it was for the Indian army's interests to keep Indian military boots in Kashmir: 'Army generals dominate the policy', it was said and speakers underlined army's power in New Delhi's policy making where Kashmir is concerned. And all speakers supported and advocated Kashmiri people's right to self-determination.*

*But still: what made my fellow panelists speak out on Kashmir that strong and passionate? Because they/we were all women speakers and more courageous than men usually are to speak out on such sensitive political issues? Or merely because female activists are not taken as serious as male speakers on such dossiers? Dr. Umra Chakravarti (Delhi University) said that in the Indian feminist*

discourse the issue of Kashmir is framed as 'a one sided love-affair and unwanted marriage by India vis-à-vis Kashmir' that therefore has no future. Chakravarti: "Framing the issue this way, no feminist can support India's claim in Kashmir ". Maybe we must re-frame the message, and thus persist.



#### Gender and militarization in Kashmir

Dr. Seema Kazi is wellknown in Europe for her academic work on gender and militarization in Kashmir. Only few years ago she als was honoruable guest of MEP Sajjad Karim to speak on the occasion of the Kashmir EU Week, organised by ICHD and Kashmir Council EU. She is educated in India, the Netherlands and UK, she has a PhD from Gender Institute, London School of Economics (LSE). Quoting Dr. Seema Kazi : 'Militarization influences Kashmir's 'social fabric' in significant ways: as militarization forecloses the possibility of open debate, people seek refuge in traditional institutions like the mosque and the family whereby the emphasis on religion and tradition serves to reinforce the social status quo'. And: 'Seventeen years of political repression and unrelenting violence profoundly influences women's lives in Kashmir. At one end is the cruel counter-offensive of the Indian state that has produced a landscape of widows, half-widows, orphans, bereaved families and a ruined society. In the middle stretches the anguish and hardship of economical survival for Kashmiri women against an unresponsive state and chaotic, often unsympethetic social context. Towards the end of the spectrum is the violence, fear and anxiety associated with a creeping Islamisation that threatens the rights and freedoms of Kashmiri women. (...) Even as militarization edges India and Pakistan close to war over Kashmir and reinforces military mobilization within Kashmir, both processes render Kashmiri women ever more insecure and vulnerable to violence by state(and non-state) agencies and discrimination within and beyond the family. A gender analysis of militarization in Kashmir thus demonstrates that gender transformations are not incidental but *intrinsic* to the fabric and process of militarization'. ('Gender and Militarization in Kashmir', paper presented at in the IKV-Academic Discourse 'Through Women's Eyes' at Utrecht University , 2007, p. 27).

**Marjan's message is: A 'genderized' analyses is crucial for understanding and acknowledging the challenges and ambitions of women in conflict as agents of change, and has the potential for a revitalizing regional and international solidarity. Europe is on the brink of a new political era, women will however persist in knocking its doors and influence its policy making for a future in solidarity and justice.**

## **Sadia Mir – vehicles of global governance**

Sadia Mir is, as Ali Raza Syed mentioned poetically, one of 'the daughters of Kashmir', for many years already living and working in London and having yearslong expertise in lobby and advocacy on Kashmir in Europe, be it the European Parliament in Brussels or the UN in Geneva. Year by year she participates in Kashmir functions as e.g. the yearly 'Kashmir EU Week' and the '1 Million Signature Campaign' of the Brussels based Kashmir Council EU.

*'We must use methods of global governance: platforms as UN, EP, etcetera. Such fora are important to influence policy making that, in the end, will change reality on the ground. We know about instruments as UDHR, CEDAW and other documents in global politics and diplomacy. How useful are they for our cause? What is the impact of these instruments on the situation of women? Do we use them extensively enough? See e.g. the UN Declaration on Enforced Disappearances that is adopted in Geneva by UN, see <http://www.un.org/en/events/disappearancesday/background.shtml>. In former years I worked on hundreds of cases of 'disappeared persons' to submit them before the UN in Geneva, but this enterprise was rather frustrating and did not deliver concrete results for the families concerned. A big problem was also to access information from the ground.*

*Another example is the Lisbon Treaty: this European Treaty puts human rights on the fore front and can thus, to my opinion, be an important policy instrument. Of course, as civilians and even as lobbyists we can use ourselves these vehicles only to a limited extent. Therefore it is important to appeal to those in charge, as for example our MEPs, to use these vehicles'.*

**Sadia's message is: let us put more effort in using methods of global governance to influence policy making and, thus, change the ground situation in Kashmir.**

It is strongly advise to cooperate with independent local civil society to bring forward the necessary information (facts and figures) from the ground as input for international lobby. Support for and cooperation with independent and genuine local human rights activists and researchers is necessary. And possible: see e.g. the cooperation by Dutch counterparts with Kashmiri civil society groups in Kashmir (as JKCCS/Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society) to realize reports on human rights violations and massgraves as e.g.: *State of Human Rights in Jammu & Kashmir 1990 -2005* (2006) and *'Facts Under Ground'* (2008) and *Buried Evidence* (2009) on unmarked/massgraves (by J&K Coalition of Civil Society (Srinagar). Producing such reports needs courage and persistence: due to monitored (international) communication and obstruction of face-to-face (international) dialogue, reproduction by third parties, etcetera, it is however often very hard to collect such facts and figures which bodies like UN as well as MEP's need for influencing policy making indeed.

### Waiting...

The film 'Waiting' by Shabnam Ara and Atul Gupta, 2005, is a story of missing people, boys and men who were picked up by security forces and then simply disappeared. The location is Kashmir. Sandwiched between India and Pakistan, Kashmir is a battleground for both. Since the men are missing, not declared dead their wives are not widows but 'half widows.' The 'half widows' need extraordinary courage in living. Personally they live with the memories of their love. They have to suddenly switch from being the woman in the veil at home to a bread-earner. Face society who treats them as unattached property as it treats most single woman in India. And all this in a war zone where anybody could get picked up or shot by an Indian security person or by any one of the militants roaming in the valley. The women and children tell their own stories. Their dreams, fears, aspirations and the hardships. Their faces reflect their tension. As the years have gone by, many have learnt to live with their hopes while others are still caught in conflicts with their in-laws, the state, religion and day to day livelihood. Their psychiatric problems add to the statistic that Kashmir has the highest number of psychotic patients in the world. These women are true survivors of a cruel period in the history of this 'paradise on earth'. <http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/457/Waiting--->

### Ali Raza Syed: 'The women of Kashmir have nothing that is mentioned in UDHR or CEDAW'.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is, so to say, the bill of rights for women. The CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The Convention defines discrimination against women as "... any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." See <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948 'as a result of the experience of the Second World War. By adopting the 30 articles of the UDHR, the international community vowed never again to allow atrocities like those of that conflict happen again'.

Examples of its articles are e.g.: **Article 3** "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person", or **Article 5** "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" or **Article 9**: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile". See <http://www.ohchr.org/en/udhr/pages/introduction.aspx> and <http://watchlist.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Universal-declaration-of-human-rights.pdf>.

'As such, it is seen as a landmark achievement of humanity', as Ali Raza Syed put it in his opening speech in the Women's Conference on Kashmir. He however added: 'We are sad that the women of Kashmir have nothing that is mentioned in UDHR or CEDAW'.



## Khaoula Siddiqi - voice of next generation Kashmiri

Khaoula Siddiqi is the co-founder of the Student International League of Kashmir (SILK) in Canada. She is born in Kashmir but raised in the West after her parents had to flee the region in her early childhood. She is daughter of Farooq Siddiqi ('Farooq Papa') who is president of World Kashmir Diaspora Alliance (WKDA) and former convenor and senior-commander of JKLF (Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front). Her mother Suraiya Siddiqi is a known and brave activist in the Kashmiri freedom movement as well. In the Kashmir Valley as well as Diaspora she contributed in various forms to the struggle as by writing, debating and demonstrating. (e.g. as part of a women delegation who tried to seek a resolution to the crisis on Hazratbal shrine (1993) and, a decade later in the Diaspora, in the Jammu Kashmir Peace Alliance (JKPA)). And also Khaoula herself is a passionate activist: here in these venues of European Parliament today, but as easy also outside in the streets (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f854rcPgKC8>).



*'The Kashmir conflict and its impact on children. I myself, my own life is an illustration of that, being born in the heat of the conflict and having fled the region with my parents in early childhood, growing up in the Diaspora, in Canada, far away from the valley of Kashmir my parents call Paradise on earth. I remember going to bed listening to the gunshots and grenade blasts. Both of my parents were activists and very often our house would be raided in the middle of night by armed soldiers. I personally experienced how the conflict has its impact on the youth of today; on us, the 'next generation' as we are often called. The question in front of us, as next generation, is how to follow-up on what this generation, so the generation of my parents and their friends and comrades, stood (and stand) for. I have formed the SILK Students International League for Kashmir and feel*

*awareness raising is still the need of the hour, especially in our world that faces many more tragedies and conflicts. I want to encourage the Kashmiri youth internationally to take an active role, to work with one another, to raise awareness, and keep the discourse alive. Kashmir must not be forgotten and as next generation we feel we have to be aware of how to outline our own roadmaps in a changed global context. My presence here with you today and my words for you are my plea to the international community to bring justice to Kashmir, and follow through on the promises of self-determination. Our voices will not get tired, and this generation will continue fighting for the cause, and we will wait for justice.'*

**Khaoula's message is: there is a next generation of young Kashmiri to follow up on what has been struggled for by the generations who gave birth to us and shared their worries and experiences about Kashmir as, once, Paradise on Earth. We will keep the discourse alive and will do it in our own way, in a global context that differs from the one of the past, but with the same dream to live in justice and freedom as our birth right.**

### **Women as agents of change**

Women as daughter, sister, wife, mother but also as comrad, as commander, as diplomat, as angel of peace, as nurse and doctor, as reporter (e.g. the long list of female journalists / war reporters) , as artist, as researcher and writer, as politician. Women are not limited to the sphere of public protest. Beyond pitched street battles in the streets and warrens of Srinagar, as in the streets in Toronto, Brussels, Amsterdam, Oslo, Paris, London, etcera, women play their role.

Rita Manchanda (2001): 'Women's roles as mothers, sisters or daughters blended with their role as agents of political resistance as militarization created a situation whereby the management of survival became politicized'.



### **Shamila Mahmood – the water, the policy, the people**

**Shamila Mahmood** was Azad Kashmir's very first woman judge and Qazia, which is a judge that applies Islamic law and jurisprudence. The impact of the conflict over Kashmir for women, and the lack of freedom and immanent fear in context of conflict in the two Kashmirs, got dramatically clear for her in working with refugees in 1992 when the first disappearances took place. She got confronted with the atrocities committed against women and their subsequent isolation from society, and dramatic lack of rehabilitation service. At present, she is a senior judicial consultant

for the Pakistan Trans Border Water Organization PTBWO. In this capacity often visits Kashmir in both sides of LOC and negotiates international investment treaties She is deeply concerned about the policy of water management vis-a-vis the Himalayan rivers: in IOK, implementation of policy and planning is embedded in a militarized context, and in AJK we will soon be confronted with its environmental consequences and how it will affect the people of Kashmir living in the areas concerned.

*'It seems that, I a way, I am the lucky one in this panel, being the one who - so far - could visit that side of the LOC regularly for my work and research. On my first visit, I felt the fear of the people living there, and only then I released myself how valuable freedom is. Entering IOK always means being confronted with that fear but it also means: sharing stories, especially with the women. I then often think: Kashmiri living abroad seem to have accepted the insolvability of the dispute. There are words, talks but no walks, as Farzana put it. An abundance of rhetorics. How otherwise to understand nothing moves, nothing changes, despite all international conferences and campaigns? The root cause of the conflict is water: rivers, dams. We have the Indus Water treaty between India and Pakistan. But India creates dams and that creation of dams by India is not agreed on the treaty: that makes the Kishenganga Hydropower project (to divert water of the Neelum River / Ganga River to Wullar Lake to generate electricity) highly controversial. I have my worries about the people on that side of LOC but especially also for all those people at this side, in Azad Jammu Kashmir. The consequences will be dramatic for the people in Neelum Valley: the river will get dry, no water will be available for the people and that will trigger massive migration. Where will people go? So far I could visit IOK and do my work, inspect the water engineering and its judicial context, talk with whoever I want and say what I feel is relevant for my research. Let's hope and see how often I still can cross to IOK. Question marks in my reports touch the political hemisphere, but I have to: people, especially the women as caretakers of daily needs, will suffer from the dire consequences of what is implemented out of line with the Indus Water Treaty.*

*As I said, I have my worries about the future of my people in Azad Jammu Kashmir and especially about the people living in its thirty-plus migrant-camps. The women will face extra hardships in running daily life. The widows and half-widows amongst them had my special attention in my former duty as Judge. I often raised the question of how to come to rehabilitation for these migrant, and especially the women. Psychological help is needed but next to that we have to explore judicial aspects in Islamic law that help to resolve their hardship. Islamic scholars expressed that these women can remarry after 4 years and thus be granted a new opportunity to fully and equally participate in social life of their community. But is this the way out for them indeed? Much more attention had to be given and work has to be done vis-as-vis these migrant-camps. It is a challenge for my friend Farzana Yaqoob as Minister of Social Affairs of Azad Jammu Kashmir. A challenge however, she needs our support for'.*

**Shamila's message is: the international community must wake up to what is happening in Kashmir and acknowledge human rights violations committed by India. It must also be acknowledged that the root cause of the Kashmir dispute is in water management. Next to that: we have to prevent environmental damage due to the policy vis-à-vis the Himalyan rivers and its dramatic humanitarian consequences for the Kashmiri people in the area concerned, which will even worsen their lives already hampered by the Kashmir conflict.**



## Jolanda Brunnekreef - connecting through arts culture

Jolanda Brunnekreef is an expert in gender and diversity studies, she has longtime experience in working in Asia. She closely followed the Tamil freedom struggle in Sri Lanka and personally experienced the pains and trauma's as bitter fruits of this struggle. She was also involved in international solidarity with Dalits in India, and in campaigns opposing child labor ('Clean Clothes Campaign'). On behalf of Marjan Lucas, who was banned by GOI to visit India from 2003 onwards, Jolanda visited the Valley of Kashmir (Srinagar) several times and could see and hear with her own eyes and ears the story of the women on the ground. Ever since, Jolanda kept in contact with various women she met, corresponding and exchanging ideas and proposals, encouraging persistence in self-empowerment.

In her contribution, Jolanda combined the beauty of poetry with the sadness of reality in Kashmir. She focused on the question: 'Is it possible to unite women on what they share despite of what divides them and triggers distrust?' She advocates arts and culture to reach out and connect.

*'Is it possible to unite women despite what divides them and creates mutual distrust in the militarized context of conflict? This is a question I asked myself on my visits to Kashmir in the recent past. It was obvious, every visit again and again, how strong the women are, how persistent to defend dignity and pride, against all odds. When discussing development of projects, they were very eager to share ideas and opinions, and cooperate. They underlined that they felt to have a lot in common. But everyone felt and sometimes expressed the uneasy feelings of distrust that frustrated a further intense and concrete cooperation indeed. Diversity in age, in education or profession, in religious or cultural or family background, in class: it could be a reason to connect and seek dialogue but, at the same time, be the reason to keep distance and frustrate cooperation. During my last visit, women came up with the idea to use arts to reach out to each other: we decide to collectively write a book, and incorporate photography, painting and poetry. The idea is still there but could not be implemented due to lack of resources. Back home in The Netherlands, I kept thinking about this idea and the book that was in our hearts but could not be written. I decide to see in the library of my city for books on Kashmir that were published indeed. I am delighted to hear about the Kashmir Documentation and Resource Centre that is recently established here in Brussels by Ali Raza Syed sb, as in the library in my home city I could find only very few books on Kashmir. But I did take a book with me today and like to conclude my contribution in this panel by reading from a book by Sudha Koul, titled 'The*

*Tiger Ladies. A Memoir of Kashmir.* 'The book pictures the pain that conflict caused but also pictures the dreams the women share. The dreams that unite them despite all odds'.

**Jolanda's message is: despite what women have in common, women also feel mutual distrust in the context of conflict. Through arts and culture we can reach out and connect.**

#### Rape as weapon of war and as cause of stigma

Afsana Rashid writes about rape survivors in Kashmir and the appropriation of rape as weapon of war by military in Kashmir. She, however, also warns that incidents of rape mostly get politicized. She writes: 'Such victims are unacceptable to society and they are treated more or less as prostitutes. Society never forgives them, on the contrary, they are victimized by both family and society'. She underlines the importance of women organizations and rehabilitation centres, preferably situated outside the Valley, to help the victimized women to come out of the trauma.

Quoting Ather Zia in 'Rapes in Kashmir, tragic play of Numbers', July 2007: 'Violence against women is not accidental but a tool used to achieve military objectives such as spreading political terror, breaking the resistance of a community, rewarding soldiers, intimidation, or to extract information. Many forms of violence that women suffer during armed conflict are gender specific in both nature and result', 'There are lies, damned lies and statistics (...). In a recent speech in the legislative assembly Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad praised the Indian troops and the State Police for what he perceives as an 'improved security situation'. (...) Are all rapes reported in Kashmir? Even when reported, what happens after that? There is a proven evidence that perpetrators are sparingly brought to book. Women in Kashmir have been raped with impunity and most of them go unreported given the social stigma and fear of retribution by the State. The GOI (Government of India) has been quick to deny and cover-up most of those cases which do get reported. (...) Azad will have to relearn his numbers from women in the villages of Konunposhpora, Dardpora, Kangan and myriads of other villages and towns; not to mention the countless others who suffer in silence-nameless and faceless.'



Dardpora/Asia 2004

## Danielle Caron – Les Droits des Femmes

Danielle Caron is Member of Brussels Parliament since 1995 already and in these months also (as MEP Sajjad Karim) very busy in campaigning for, and contesting in, Belgian Regional Elections on 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2014. As a female politician and activist, she well understands the persistence needed to make sure to be heard and seen in situations and fora that matter, and to make sure to be part of the decision making process by people of power. Danielle is herself an illustration of a woman who is using her expertise and charm in politics, instead of ego-exposure, she however reiterates: 'Never accept to be taken for granted'.

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In her contribution, Danielle reiterates the importance of taking women's rights ('les droits de femmes') very serious, not only in Asia but also in Europe: *'The battle for women's rights is vibrant but faces strong obstruction in for example Spain, where the right to abort is denied to women. In Belgium we campaign for a 'Ministère de Femmes', which would be a unicum in Europe but a necessity to realize women's rights indeed when it comes to e.g. education, equal salaries, sexual and reproductive rights, parliamentary representation.*

*On my visits to Kashmir I always impressed by the courage and persistence of women in survival despite drama, e.g. after the deadly earthquake of 2005. But also in surviving conflict, as books as from Dr. Seema Kazi (as also mentioned by Marjan Lucas) learned me. In my own work here in Europe, Brussels, I highly appreciate cooperation with women organizations as Women for Peace/Femmes pour la Paix. Together we try to use the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>) to realize our aims in the struggle for women's rights, in Belgium / Europe and worldwide. The UNSC Resolution 1325 advocates a gender perspective on the needs, rights and role of women and girls in rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction. It is a vehicle of global governance, as Sadia puts it, that encourages not to give up but to paraphrase Martin Luther King Jr., to persist in struggling to realize indeed our women's right dreams'.*

**Danielle's message is: women are very courageous and persistent to survive despite hardships that daily life, especially in context of political conflict, imposes on them. The UN Resolution 1325 encourages women globally to keep struggling to realize dreams.**



### The cost of militarization extending across homes

Quoting Dr. Seema Kazi, explaining how the bitter psychological fruits of humiliation of Kashmir men due to militarization, equally effect Kashmiri women: 'The cost of militarization in Kashmir thus begins with its human rights tragedy but does not end there. For extending silently across homes and prisons, offices and university, military interrogations centers and bazaars, is the humiliation and emasculation of Kashmir's men that extracts an intangible albeit decisive price from Kashmiri women'. ( 'Between Democracy & Nation. Gender and Militarisation in Kashmir', 2009).

### Farzana Yaqoob – from talking to walking, and genderizing the budgets

In his introductory speech, Ali Raza Syed announced Farzana as 'a daughter of Kashmir, born in freedom but seeing the pain of her sisters in IOK'. Farzana Yaqoob was a guest of MEP Sajjad Karim and Ali Raza Syed in the Kashmir EU Week of September 2013 as well. As Minister of Social Affairs, Farzana wants empowerment of women in Azad Jammu Kashmir, and concrete progress in terms of education and employment. Farzana is an eloquent and passionate speaker who, when meeting Kashmiri and Pakistani women in the Diaspora in Belgium, encouraged these women to express themselves as fearless, intelligent and passionate as she is used to do herself.



*'I am delighted to be here to speak to you in this panel, and be your guest in the heart of the EU. But, I must clearly say: I do not merely want to 'tea and talk' but primarily to 'work and walk'. We came together here to talk and to listen, to learn and to act. We need to make a difference and get beyond rhetorics . 'Change!' is not merely a slogan of US President Obama but has to be our slogan as well. I admit, it is not easy: the P of Pessimism is very big and heavy and vast. But we have to replace that by the O of Optimism. But, let me be clear on this: I don't want an Arab Spring to happen in Kashmir, in the sense that I don't want more bloodshed and more suffering. It needs to be resolved through non-violence. I want Summer, yes, an 'Everlasting Summer' (see the lecture with this title of Marjan Lucas*

on <http://muslim-institute.org/newsletter-conf-kashmir-3.html>). I am dedicated to improve the life of my people in Kashmir and it is my urgent aim to restore their dignity. Words must be implemented, women are for too long held in the position of 'wait and see' whereas they are (c.q. have to be) themselves the real actors of change in the sense that they are victims as well as actors.

Farzana Yaqoob felt she lacks support and resources to implement plans and projects she has in mind for Azad Kashmir, and possibly for cross LOC Women's Dialogue. Ongoing communication between her and the European hosts has to result in outlining a strategy to provide the support she needs. In Europe, ongoing lobby has to be done (to create a support network for empowerment of women in Kashmir) as well as in Azad Jammu Kashmir and Pakistan as region of concern. It will be a huge but important challenge for her to 'genderize' the regular national budgets and resources, in other words: to rightfully claim part of the existing national financial resources for her work for, and with, women in Kashmir.

**Farzana's message is: we need to make a difference, we have to deliver and get beyond rhetorics and replace the P of pessimism by the O of optimism, especially when it comes to empowerment of women. 'Genderizing' policy making and allocation of resources is the need of the hour.**



Parveena / Malala



## Wednesday 9th of April 2014

### Meeting Amnesty International (see attachment 4).

A meeting with Amnesty International, HQ Brussels, was arranged on Wednesday 9th of April 2014 and mutually highly appreciated. We agreed to on Chattam House Rules not to publicly share the content and conclusions of the session but to soon follow up in Brussels and the London-HQ.

### Meeting ICG International Crisisgroup

A meeting with the International Crisis Group (ICG) was, this time, not possible. Our questions to ICG would have been about the (lack of) a special focus on 'women & conflict' in Kashmir'. ICG published several reports on Kashmir in last many years. For example its Asia Briefing 'Steps Towards Peace: Putting Kashmiris First' (2010), and 'India, Pakistan and Kashmir: Stabilising a Cold Peace' (2006). For more Asia Briefing see <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/kashmir.aspx>. ICG publishes monthly updates from Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> 2003 onwards in its online CrisisWatch Database. See: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/crisiswatch-database.aspx?CountryIDs=%7b11ED1F71-E1A7-4D80-B3E7-3071D06D7FCA%7d#results>.

## Attachment 1 - Program of the visit as sent to invitees



### **‘Kashmir through women’s eyes’**

#### **Program of the visit to Brussels in April 2014**

6 and 7 April 2014	Arrivals of guests in Brussels
Monday 7/4	Welcome Dinner hosted by Khalid Joshi Sahib (KWDA)
Tuesday 8 /4	10 AM - 12.30 PM Women’s Conference in European Parliament 1 – 2.30 PM Lunch (for guests) in European Parliament 2.30 PM Meetings with Members of Parliament and of EP Committees Evening dinner in KDRC - office
Wednesday 9 /4	Meetings with NGO’s in Brussels (time-table to be confirmed)  <i>12 – 2 PM Women’s Lunch with local female representatives of political parties, activist groups and others, in the KDRC (Kashmir Documentation and Resource Center, Brussels) prepared by Shamim Shah</i>  5.30 – 7.30 PM Pressmeeting in the KDRC  9 PM Dinner in Brussels’ Restaurant
Thursday 10 /4	Free / Departures

For guests who will stay for few days more, a program is yet to be proposed/jointly discussed

KDRC Kashmir Documentation and Resource Center  
Rue Willems 23, 1210 Sint Joost / Brussels  
Tel. : + 32 22806994 / +32 486 256005  
Email : ICHD [info@ichd.eu](mailto:info@ichd.eu)  
cc. to Ramona Benzar [benzar\\_ramona@yahoo.com](mailto:benzar_ramona@yahoo.com)

## Attachment 2 - Ali Raza Syed's speech 8<sup>th</sup> of April, Brussels

### Kashmir Through Women's Eyes'

Ladies and gentlemen, Assalam o Alaikum

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I welcome you all, in this historic conference, on behalf of my colleagues, friends organizations, especially ECR, volunteers and the people of Kashmir. I termed this conference as historic not in terms of number of people present here or grandeur of the event. Rather, i say so because this conference has realised a great dream of ICHD. We always wanted to convene such an event where we could see the issue of Kashmir in purely humanistic perspective common to all humanity. We always believed that the emotional pain of women and children shall touch the hearts irrespective political considerations and economic interests. In fact, the issue of the women lies at the heart of the problem.

I am deeply grateful to the panel as well. This panel, in fact, makes this conference a historic one. Perhaps first time in the history of the movement of the Kashmir, you can see almost every aspect of the collective lives of Kashmiri women. In Ms. Farzana Yaqoob, you will listen to a daughter of Azad Kashmir who was born in freedom and dignity but feels the pain of her sisters in the occupied Kashmir. She tells how all the blessings of freedom and honourable living gets nullified when she see her fellow Kashmiri women getting raped, molested, harassed, tortured, insulted, murdered, widowed, disappeared and suppressed.

In Khaoula Siddiqui, you will see a great political activist, and the daughter of Mr. Farooq Siddiqui who is an all time Papa of the Kashmiri activists. This way, she is the sister of every Kashmiri activist. She knows what does it mean when your father is disappeared or arrested or when you know that he could be killed anytime. And she knows how you feel living away from your beloved land, which is probably the most beautiful land on the planet earth. And it is not just the beauty of the country, it is the relationships, it is the collective sorrows and happiness that makes the fabric of a social life.

In Ms. Sadia Mir, you will see another daughter of Kashmir whose soul is split apart between two parts of the same land. Like thousands of us, her family is divided into both sides of Kashmir. She knows what does it mean when you are cut off from your roots. Living in UK, she is at pains that her immense potential and creative talent is not used at the service of her land. But then, she is dedicated her life for the common dream.

We could not have the opportunity to receive Mrs. Mushaal Malik but i salute her struggle and endurance. In her you see a wife living under constant fear. Who does not know when her husband will be arrested, disappeared or killed. A heart full of pain and uncertainty can understand the feelings of everybody around. She can spot the fear of the school going girls, housewives, workers and activists. She know the life under the shadows of the gun.

We have here another daughter of Kashmir, Ms. Shumaila Mehmood, another story of tireless struggle and unshakable commitment for the rights and freedoms of her fellow Kashmiris.

In Marjan Lucas, you see a European human rights activist who has dedicated her life for the pursuit of justice for the people in the conflict areas. In fact, she symbolises and personifies the hope for the struggle of Kashmiri people. A brave woman, a dedicated activist and a selfless friend, she shows that Kashmir issue is not just the problem of Kashmiri's, rather it is a scar on the conscience of humanity.

And in Danielle Caron, we see a soft hearted, woman of conscience who has always made her available to every call from the suppressed nation of Kashmir, in times of humanitarian crises or political crisis. And one of the greatest sons of Pakistan, Mr. Sajjad Karim is the host of this conference. As his country Pakistan itself, he is an unshakable support for the struggle of Kashmir.

So, this is a historic conference. It is a memorable combination of the committed souls under one roof. And this is the hope. Our hope lies in unanimous voice for justice irrespective of nationalities, religions and cultures. In reality, our entire struggle in Europe is directed towards making such bridges and combinations.

A women's eye is not the birds eye that loses so many important micro details. Rather, a women's eye is the eye of the soul. It is the third eye of a society that can see the deepest realities and can foresee the future. The colours of the eyes of the women of any nation reflect the colours of the collective soul. Reflecting the passionate heart, the God has bestowed the women the great gift of compassion and love as a daughter, sister, wife, and above all, as a mother. In all of these roles, she always stands at the ground and prefers peace and continuity of the values that make up the coming generations. She moves on passion and compassion. She is always ready to pay every cost for peace and peaceful continuity. But a women comes out against worst tyranny as well. She does so when she sees everything mentioned above falling in pieces. And this is story of "Kashmir through Women's Eyes".

I cannot resist mentioning the great document CEDAW, generally called as the bill for the rights of the women. Like UDHR, it is also a landmark achievement of the humanity. In a nutshell, the document as a set of values and policy guidelines, protects the women from inhuman treatment including rape and murder. It asks the states and societies to take proactive measures to give her the rights and freedoms. In fact, it is a proactive document in itself as it guarantees additional rights and freedom along with everything that is guaranteed in Universal Declaration of Human Rights including the right to life, freedom of thought, freedom of choice, right to travel, protection from civil and political repression and right to self determination as well. We are proud to see that a lot of nations are progressing well in pursuing these justified goals.

And we are sad to see that the women of Kashmir have nothing that is mentioned in UDHR or CEDAW. In Kashmir, if you are alive, it is luck or the merci of the 800,000 strong forces operating under blackest laws. Or it is because of the fact that you are silent. In occupied Kashmir, speaking for justice and rightful demands means torture, disappearance, murder and rape. And you don't know if your relatives shall see your dead body or you will be buried in some mass grave or a grave hurriedly dug in the compound of a jail.

The women of Kashmir have chosen to come out for their rights and freedom because they see no hope for their generation under the tyranny of a ruthless power. This way, you see two colours in the eyes of the women, the colour of sadness and the colour of commitment. And today's conference shall give you many opportunities to see these two colours.

I thank you again,

Ali Raza Syed,

ICHHD Chair and President of Kashmir Council EU

Brussels 8 April 2014

### **Attachment 3 - Khaoula Siddiqi's contribution on 8<sup>th</sup> of April, Brussels**

Today I would like to share my story with you, so you may get a glimpse into how I view the Kashmir issue. I was born in Kashmir, at the peak of the insurgency.

Most of your development happens between the ages of 0 and 5/6 – in that case, I was born into the conflict, and my understanding of the world at large, was heavily shaped by the images of the insurgency.

This is true for many people of my generation, but where it may differ, is that I was not shielded from the realities of the conflict, because both my father and mother were actively involved. Of course during that period, in the late 80's, nearly every family in Kashmir was involved, as the issue transcended all levels.

Before I begin, I want to share a quick story. My niece, my cousin's daughter, Nur, moved to Canada when she was 4 years old. In one of her first weeks at kindergarten she was asked to draw a picture of something – this picture that she drew, made the teacher call her parents and ask them to explain : "Why, when other children were drawing pictures of their family playing, and flowers, did their daughter draw an army officer with a gun?!" This is a 5 year old, who was born in Kashmir under times of 'normalcy', with no political exposure, just a quiet witness.

I on the other hand, had a different upbringing, far from normalcy. One of my earliest childhood memories was of visiting my father in Papa II, an interrogation center famous for torture. He was taken in as a political prisoner, like hundreds of academics, doctors, engineers, lawyers were taken. He had been severely tortured - I remember seeing my father, and, seeing the scene of him in Papa II, being afraid. I just remember the fear I felt, and the worry in his eyes at my agitation. Many young girls have seen their fathers, brothers in equal or even more terrifying states.

Our house in Nagin, an area in Srinagar, would get raided, a general occurrence. I remember, I would clutch my father in the middle of the night, while the Army searched our house. We had no rights, no say on anything. Anything could happen at any time. Constantly, people we knew were dying, friends of our family, respectable men. We attended funerals, observed the crackdowns and curfews – as a young child, that was all I'd witnessed. I remember going to bed each night, to the sounds of gunfire, and grenades exploding in the distance. It became normal – but it should not be, for any child.

What kind of society is it, where everyone knows someone who's been tortured, killed, assaulted, or has disappeared? If they don't know anyone, they themselves have probably gone through it – The amount of people the conflict has directly affected is a staggering statistic. I don't want to share any statistics today, because they don't convey the real emotion of what is happening in Kashmir.

My mother – Suraiya, who was raised outside of Srinagar, attended a boarding school most of her life, and was also very much involved. Even as a highly educated woman, she would take to the streets to protest, day after day, coming home bloodied and bruised. With stories of being shot at and assaulted. Let me ask you, or you maybe ask me: what compels a woman with 2 kids, and family responsibilities to take to the streets and demand her rights? It is: knowing that there is injustice, a thirst for freedom, for her rights, that this struggle is bigger than her, and her family.

I was in Kashmir in 2008, when the second 'uprising' came about. I saw everyone take to the streets once again. Women in the front, leading protests in some cases. Close to a million people came out to Eid Gah, the martyr's graveyard in the middle of Kashmir. The media reports numbers below that, as it tends to distort the severity of these things. Kashmir is like a pot, simmering, ready to boil. The society is tense - The media will try to distort the sentiment of the people, but it's there – facts are facts. These people will always come out, because the alternative of sitting quietly, waiting for change while being oppressed, for international intervention, has proven to be far less reliable.

Kashmiri society is one of fear, and hushed tones, where people are subject to live in a sort of quiet desperation, this is most obvious with Kashmiri women. There are thousands of unreported cases of institutionalized sexual violence in Kashmir. There is a shame and stigma associated with it, since the society is quite patriarchal, so thousands more of these go unreported. The ripple effect of it, is something one can't ignore. What happens to one individual, effects the family, and that effects the community, and that affects the society. Of course a similar story would receive widespread media attention, and calls for social examination if it was to happen in neighboring countries. Here, there is no need for examination – there is a proper occupation by forces who are given power and protection from acting like civil human beings.

In most developing countries, it's a well known fact that women are marginalized. But nowhere like Kashmir have I seen the strange mix of a lack of rights, politically and socially. There are a lot of strong social issues that Kashmir faces, like the rest of the subcontinent – but it's hard to look at it a-politically when everyone is a subject of a brutal military occupation.

The struggle for self-determination began in 1947, at the partition of India and Pakistan. I often get asked, do you consider yourself Indian or Pakistani? I reply with the truth: "Kashmir has always been Kashmir, it existed before both India or Pakistan were formed, so what do you want me to say?!"

We are the most densely militarized region in the world. We were promised the right to self-determination, and the world has witnessed our relentless efforts to achieve it. 66 years of repression, of secret operations from the oppressors, of spying, blackmail, torture, rape, rigged elections, of killing – the list goes on and on. The most terrifying part of it is that the occupation is not just physical, with the presence of army tanks on the street, its psychological, its strategic – it wears down a society, a culture, but as Kashmiris we have to be aware of that, and we cannot allow that to happen.

I have so much respect for Kashmiri women, who have shouldered the terrors of the occupation ; who wait for social and political justice; who have suffered, and fought, and fought and suffered, and will continue to do so until their voices are heard. Who have lost their sons at the hands of a brutal occupation, whether they were killed, or plucked up one day, never to return home. They are probably lying in one of the many mass graves in Kashmir. Those who have seen their daughters assaulted, marginalized and in the worst cases, raped or killed. These women have suffered. The cure for suffering is closure, redemption – it is not having the stark reminder of the perpetrators of who did whatever it is, on every street corner. It is for demilitarization. Period. Self-determination. Period

When unarmed civilian men, women and children face down a massive army with guns, it is something to be noted, to be respected – it can't be written off. Especially since it's been close to 20 visible years of this powerful sentiment, and nearly 70 years of not being granted our full rights.

On behalf of my generation, of the diaspora youth, of Kashmiris all over the globe, I want to remind the international community, that we are still waiting for what we were promised.

20 years later, from where I began my story, I have not been able to shake off what I witnessed - I still carry everything with me... Despite living in Canada, my connection to Kashmir is deep rooted and will not change. In 2008, as students at the University of Toronto, Mueen Hakak and I formed the Students International League for Kashmir (SILK), a non-profit organization, to raise awareness of the human rights issues in Kashmir. What we found was that so many people were not aware of what was going on, what the conflict was about, and about the stark human rights violation. I would encourage the Kashmiri youth internationally to take an active role, to work with one another, to raise awareness, and keep the discourse alive.

As long as these stark human rights violations continue, as long as this rhetoric continues without any visible action, as long as Kashmiri men and women alike live without true political freedom, free from fear, these uprisings will continue and it will only become a larger stain on the conscience of those nations who choose ignore the plight of the Kashmiri people. This is a plea to the international

community to bring justice to Kashmir, and follow through on the promises of self-determination. Our voices will not get tired, and this generation will continue fighting for the cause, and we will wait for justice.

Thank you.



Kashmir, Paradise

## Attachment 4 - Request for a meeting as sent to Amnesty International

To Amnesty International – Brussels’ office

Director Dr. Nicolas J. Beger

Request for meeting a Kashmir- delegation on April 9th in Brussels

Dear Sir, Madam

Kindly receive this letter on behalf of the organizers of a Women’s Conference on Kashmir, planned for April 8<sup>th</sup> 2014 in European Parliament.

First of all we want to express gratitude for the attention for Kashmir in your work in last many years. For example your letter to President of the European Council Mr. Herman van Rompuy, on occasion of the India-EU Summit in December 2010<sup>1</sup>. And the reference to violations of human rights by Indian forces in Kashmir, in the Amnesty Yearly Report 2012 (London)<sup>2</sup>.

Today we send you our kind request for a meeting between you, as Brussels’ office of Amnesty International, and a well respected delegation of our Kashmiri guests.

From our side will participate, inter alia, Farooq Siddiqi (Chairman of World Kashmiri Diaspora Alliance, Canada), Ms. Farzana Yaqoob (Minister of Social Affairs of Azad Kashmir), Ms. Mushaal Mulick (artist and activist and wife of JKLF leader Yassin Malik), Ms. Kaoula Siddiqi (young Kashmiri youth activist in Canada), Ms. Sadia Mir (Kashmiri academician at LSE London) and Mr. Ali Raza Syed (Chair of ICHD International Council for Human Development, Brussels).

We would highly appreciate to mutually discuss ‘ground affairs’ as e.g. ongoing human rights abuses, in Kashmir and your work as the international actor in Europe, in casu the EU.

We hope we can agree on a meeting on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> of April, preferably before noon or between 2 and 4 PM. The venue of the meeting can either be at your office or in our KDRC Kashmir Documentation and Resource Center, Rue Willems 23 – 1210 Sint Joost/Brussels.

Please send us your response on shortest note. We’d be gladly willing to provide additional information on guests, topics, etc. for preparing the meeting.

On behalf of the organizer Ali Raza Syed, Chairperson of ICHD/Kashmir Council EU  
Looking forward for your reply

Yours sincerely

Ms. Ramona Benzar, tel. 0486 256005 / 022806994  
[Benzar\\_ramona@yahoo.com](mailto:Benzar_ramona@yahoo.com) cc. [info@ichd.eu](mailto:info@ichd.eu) c/o Ali Raza Syed

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Doc2010/B1024\\_Letter\\_to\\_VR\\_EU-India\\_Summit\\_December\\_2010.pdf](http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Doc2010/B1024_Letter_to_VR_EU-India_Summit_December_2010.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://amnesty-v3.temp.brainlane.com/content/assets/Annual\\_Report/AIR12-Report-English.pdf](http://amnesty-v3.temp.brainlane.com/content/assets/Annual_Report/AIR12-Report-English.pdf)

## Attachment 5 - PRESS RELEASE

**MEP Karim backs women of Kashmir to bring peace to the region**

### **Sajjad Karim MEP – Conservative MEP for the North West**

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BRUSSELS, 08 APRIL 2014 - MEP Dr Sajjad Karim promoted the role of Kashmiri women and said they could be 'the key factor in promoting peace in the region' in a powerful high level conference in the European Parliament today.

The British MEP for the North West of England hailed the conference as a step in the right direction as many of the speakers were influential women from Kashmir, such as Farzana Yaqoob, Minister of Social Affairs of Azad Kashmir and Khaoula Siddiqi, who is the co-founder of the Student International League of Kashmir (SILK) in Canada.

MEP Dr Sajjad Karim hosted the conference and was the keynote speaker. He said: "Among others, the Kashmir dispute is the oldest, unresolved, international dispute in the world today. And women have not been particularly spared, of which they are just as much the victims as men. But the question of women in conflicts and as peace builders is a very complex issue and women should not be seen only as victims but also as key actors promoting peace."

The conference attracted a wide audience with attendance from several human rights NGOs, a representative from the Pakistani Embassy and MEPs.

The conference chief organiser, Ali Raza Syed, introduced the speakers and highlighted the urgent need for protecting women in Kashmir: "We have the opportunity to listen to the daughters of Kashmir. Many flew in from different parts of the world to speak at today's event."

Kashmiri Minister for Social Affairs, Farzana Yaqoob, had a rousing speech and a rally call for the audience. She said: "We, the women of Kashmir, shall make a difference. We will make a difference. This is not an issue of men; it is an issue of families, men, women and children. These issues should be solved without blood flowing in the streets."

The audience was also deeply moved to hear the personal account of Khaoula Siddiqi who grew up in Kashmir and witnessed some of the devastation. Khaoula Siddiqi is daughter to famous Kashmiri activist, Farooq Siddiqi. She said: "I remember going to bed listening to the gunshots and grenade blasts. Both of my parents were activists and very often our house would be raided in the middle of night by armed soldiers."

Tensions between Kashmir's two nuclear armed neighbours, India and Pakistan, remain high ahead of India's elections which have already begun. It is widely predicted that Narendra Modi, the man accused of facilitating the massacre of Muslims in 2002, will be India's new Prime Minister.

[http://www.theasians.co.uk/story/20140409\\_mep\\_kashmir\\_women](http://www.theasians.co.uk/story/20140409_mep_kashmir_women)

## Attachment 6 - Further viewing and reading

1 <http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=Content&sd=Articles&ArticleID=6878> . Women Speaking about bridging the chasm between Kashmir and the country *quoting inter alia* Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal, Shabnam Hashmi, Justine Hardy, and others

2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f854rcPgKC8> Khaoula Siddiqi's speech in a demonstration in Toronto, Canada

3 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04ljymCm3qw> Youtube-video 'Tehelka Talking Kashmir, with Uma Chakravarti: A Feminist Perspective' (2010)

4 <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-6-140911-Intra-Kashmir-Women-Dialogue-begins-tomorrow> Azad Jammu & Kashmir Women for Peace Organisation (AJKWPO) organising a three-day 'Intra-Kashmir, Cross-LoC Women Dialogue' at Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir. Interview with AJKWPO Chief Executive Office Mrs. Nayyar Malik.

5 <http://cscuk.dfid.gov.uk/2013/07/women-kashmir-and-peace-talks/> 'Nobody can silence me – I have every right to speak', coverage of women protest against powercuts, by Ezabir Ali.

6 <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2012/Oct/12/kashmiri-migrant-woman-threatens-to-commit-suicide-with-six-kids-54.asp> Kashmiri migrant woman threatens to commit suicide with six kids

7 <http://www.artsenzondergrenzen.nl/verhalen/alle-fotos/kasjmir,-india.aspx> Medical and psychological help for Kashmiri civilians victimized by violence, with photo's by Giulio di Sturco (2010)

8 <http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/457/Waiting---> Film about missing people, widows and half-widows of Kashmir. By Shabnam Ara and Atul Gupta, 2005.

### Further Reading:

Urvashi Butalia (ed.): 'Speaking Peace. Women's Voices from Kashmir'. New Delhi, 2002.

Cabeiri deBergh Robinson: 'Body of Victim, Body of Warrior'. California, 2013.

Amna Farooq Shah, Marjan Lucas a.o.: 'Life in Migrantcamps of AJK. Kashmiri Migrants in the Picture'. Utrecht/Lahore, 2010. See: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/09/201391711186325937.html>

Justine Hardy: 'In the Valley of Mist'. Kashmir's long war: one family's extraordinary story'. London, 2009.

Aasia Jeelani: 'Dardpora, a Village of Pain and Misery', 2004. See <http://voicesunheard1.wordpress.com/>

Seema Kazi: 'Between Democracy & Nation. Gender and Militarisation in Kashmir'. New Delhi, 2009.

Sudha Koul: 'The Tiger Ladies. A Memoir of Kashmir'. Boston, 2002.

Marjan Lucas: 'Everlasting Summer in Kashmir', 2014 See : <http://muslim-institute.org/newsletter-conf-kashmir-3.html>

Rita Manchanda: 'Guns and Burqa. Women in the Kashmir Conflict'. New Delhi, 2001.

Afsana Rashid: 'Waiting for Justice: Widows and Half-Widows'. Srinagar, 2008.

Sanne Rotmeijer: 'Standing in complexity: positions on diversity and conflict'. Utrecht, 2010.

Victoria Schofield: 'Kashmir in Conflict. India, Pakistan and the Unending War'. New York, 2003.

Laura Schuurmans: 'Kashmir, Paradise on Earth or Nuclear Flashpoint'. Jakarta, 2010.

Shobna Sonpar: 'Violent Activism. A Psychosocial Study of Ex-Militants in Jammu Kashmir'. New Delhi, 2007.

Ather Zia : 'Rapes in Kashmir, tragic play of Numbers' , July 2007.



**We thank MEP Sajjad Karim and Ali Raza Syed for their hospitality and solidarity**

**Farzana Yaqoob: 'Last but not least: if we want to change something we have to take the men in account and need to take them along with us on our road forward'.**