

# Media Update

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UNITED NATIONS  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

## No steps taken by India or Pakistan to improve human rights situation in Kashmir – UN

GENEVA (8 July 2019) – A UN human rights report on the situation in India-Administered Kashmir and Pakistan-Administered Kashmir from May 2018 to April 2019, says the number of civilian casualties reported over the 12-month period may be the highest in over a decade, and noted that neither India nor Pakistan have taken any concrete steps to address the numerous concerns raised in an earlier UN report.\*

The new report, published on Monday by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, describes how tensions over Kashmir – which rose sharply after a deadly suicide bombing in February targeting Indian security forces in Pulwama -- continue to have a severe impact on the human rights of civilians, including the right to life.

According to data gathered by local civil society, the report says, “around 160 civilians were killed in 2018, which is believed to be the highest number in over a decade. Last year also registered the highest number of conflict-related casualties since 2008 with 586 people killed, including 267 members of armed groups and 159 security forces personnel.”

The report notes that the Union Ministry for Home Affairs has published lower casualty figures, citing 37 civilians, 238 terrorists and 86 security forces personnel killed in the 11 months up to 2 December 2018.

Of the 160 civilian deaths reported by local organizations, 71 were allegedly killed by Indian security forces, 43 by alleged members of armed groups or by



unidentified gunmen, and 29 were reportedly killed due to shelling and firing by Pakistani troops in areas along the Line of Control. According to the Government of Pakistan, a further 35 civilians were killed and 135 injured on the Pakistan side of the Line of Control due to shelling and firing by Indian forces during 2018.

Two armed groups have been accused of recruiting and deploying child soldiers in Indian-Administered Kashmir, and armed groups were reportedly responsible for attacks on people affiliated or associated with political organizations in Jammu and Kashmir, including the killing of at least six political party workers and a separatist leader. In the lead up to local elections scheduled for October 2018, armed groups threatened people participating in the elections and warned of “dire consequences” if those running for election did not immediately withdraw their nominations.

The report notes that in Indian-Administered Kashmir, accountability for violations committed by members of the Indian security forces remains virtually non-existent.

Despite the high numbers of civilians killed in the vicinity of encounters between security forces and members of armed groups, it says, “there is no information about any new investigation into excessive use of force leading to casualties. There is no information on the status of the five investigations launched into extrajudicial executions in 2016. The Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir did not establish any investigations into civilian killings in 2017. No prosecutions have been reported. It does not appear that Indian security forces have been asked to re-evaluate or change their crowd-control techniques or rules of engagement.”

Arbitrary detention and so-called “cordon and search operations” leading to a range of human rights violations, continue to be deeply problematic, as do the special legal regimes applying to Indian-Administered Kashmir.

“The Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act 1990 (AFSPA) remains a key obstacle to accountability,” the report says. “Section 7 of the AFSPA prohibits the prosecution of security forces personnel unless the Government of India grants a prior permission or ‘sanction’ to prosecute. In nearly three decades that the law has been in force in Jammu and Kashmir, there has not been a single prosecution of armed forces personnel granted by the central government. The Indian Army has also been resisting efforts to release details of trials conducted by military courts where soldiers were

initially found guilty but later acquitted and released by a higher military tribunal.”

In addition, the report notes, “no security forces personnel accused of torture or other forms of degrading and inhuman treatment have been prosecuted in a civilian court since these allegations started emerging in the early 1990s.”

And despite international concerns at the alarming numbers of deaths and life-altering injuries caused by the security forces’ regular use of shotguns as a means of crowd control – even though they are not deployed elsewhere in India – they continue to be employed, leading to further deaths and serious injuries.

The report describes how, among various other incidents, a 19-month-old girl was hit by metal shotgun pellets in her right eye on 25 November 2018. According to information from Srinagar’s Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital, where most people injured by shotgun pellets are treated, “a total of 1,253 people have been blinded by the metal pellets used by security forces from mid-2016 to end of 2018.”

The report also examines human rights violations in Pakistan-Administered Kashmir. While different in nature to the violations taking place on the other side of the Line of Control, people living in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as in Gilgit-Baltistan are also deprived of a number of fundamental human rights, particularly in relation to freedoms of expression and opinion, peaceful assembly and association. The report notes no steps have been taken to resolve the main issues, including a number of highly problematic legal restrictions, outlined in the previous UN Human Rights Office report.

“Anti-terrorism laws continue to be misused to target political opposition as well as civil society activists,” the report says, adding that nationalist and pro-independence political parties “claim that they regularly face threats, intimidation and even arrests for their political activities from local authorities or intelligence agencies.” Threats are also often “directed at their family members including children.”

Citing specific cases, the report also notes how journalists in Pakistan-Administered Kashmir “continue to face threats and harassment in the course of carrying out their professional duties.”

The report also says the UN Human Rights Office has received “credible information of enforced disappearances of people from Pakistan-Administered Kashmir including those who were held in secret detention and those whose fate and whereabouts continue to remain unknown.”

“In almost all cases,” it adds, “victim groups allege that Pakistani intelligence agencies were responsible for the disappearances. There are fears that people subjected to enforced disappearances from Pakistan-Administered Kashmir may have been detained in military-run internment centres in Pakistan.”

The report also notes that four major armed groups believed to be currently operating in Indian-Administered Kashmir – Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen and Harakat Ul-Mujahidin – are believed to be based on the Pakistan side of the Line of Control.

The report stresses that “neither the Governments of India nor of Pakistan have taken clear steps to address and implement the recommendations” made in the UN Human Rights Office’s previous report, published in June 2018. It therefore restates those recommendations along with additional ones. It also calls on the 47-Member-State UN Human Rights Council to “consider... the possible establishment of a commission of inquiry to conduct a comprehensive independent international investigations into allegations of human rights violations in Kashmir.”

The full 2019 report is available [here](#)

\* The first ever UN human rights [report](#) on the human rights situation in Kashmir was released on 14 June 2018.

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## FAO

PRESS RELEASE

### Green Climate Fund approves major FAO climate change resilience project in Pakistan

**The project is worth over \$47 million and stands to directly benefit 1.3 million people**

7 July 2019, Songdo, Republic of Korea - The Board of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) today approved an FAO project designed to transform Pakistan's Indus River Basin by improving agriculture and water management to make this vital food-producing region more resilient to climate change.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) has provided FAO with a grant of nearly \$35 million for this work, while the provincial governments of Punjab and Sindh have committed an additional \$12.7 million in co-financing to be managed by FAO.

Welcoming the GCF's decision, Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director-General, Climate and Natural Resources said: "We are at a critical moment that calls for bold climate action that can stimulate concrete solutions to help build resilience. The approval of this project – the first FAO-led GCF project in Asia - is an important step forward in FAO's broader support to countries to respond to climate change, in partnership with the GCF."

#### Climate change threatens a vital source of food security and livelihoods

In the Indus River Basin, agriculture employs nearly 26 percent of Pakistan's labour force and produces more than 90 percent of the country's agriculture outputs. However, extended droughts and floods have affected millions of



people in recent years. Such extreme weather events are expected to become more frequent and severe in Pakistan as a result of climate change. As temperatures continue to rise and precipitation patterns continue to change, water will become increasingly scarce and difficult for farmers to utilize, jeopardizing the food security and livelihoods of Indus Basin farmers, as well as overall food security in Pakistan.

“This new FAO project, thanks to support from the Green Climate Fund and the Government, will help shift Pakistan and its Indus Basin agriculture from a current situation of high vulnerability toward an alternative paradigm wherein better information, water management and farming practices will significantly increase resilience to climate change,” said Mina Dowlatchahi, FAO Representative in Pakistan. “This is a major commitment and we look forward to working with government and other partners for the direct benefit of some 1.3 million rural people and indirectly for millions more.”

### **A major undertaking that required a major commitment**

The Indus Basin – home to more than 90 million rural inhabitants and the world’s largest contiguous irrigation system – covers some 18 million hectares. Agriculture consumes roughly 90 percent of all available fresh water supplies in Pakistan and in the context of changing climatic conditions, the nexus between water and agriculture is hugely important for Pakistan as a country.

“The core of this project involves coordinated actions to pool data, information and knowledge, through the use of technology and institutionalizing routine processes to disseminate this knowledge to agriculture and water management authorities, extension workers and ultimately to farmers,” said Taka Hagiwara, Service Chief for Asia and the Pacific of the FAO Investment Centre and the Project’s Technical Team Leader. “The knowledge, together with improved access to credit, will enable farmers’ adoption of proven good practices such as Climate Resilient Agriculture (CRA) and On Farm Water Management (OFWM),” he added.

In addition to working closely with provincial government agencies, the project will also work with partners and local agricultural service providers (e.g. input providers, young agro-technicians) to understand, and respond to, the changing market dynamics involved in the climate-resilient transformation of Indus Basin agriculture.

Major international financial institutions, including the World Bank and other partners, have already indicated a strong interest to invest in project-supported systems and capacities in other districts and provinces once successfully applied under this project.

The approval of this project – the first FAO-led GCF project in Asia – is an important step forward in FAO’s broader support to countries to respond to climate change in partnership with the GCF. Two other FAO-led projects have already been approved in Paraguay and El Salvador. FAO is also actively supporting countries to enhance their planning and capacities for climate change-related investments as a Delivery Partner under the GCF Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme. In the years to come, FAO expects to continue scaling up its support, and establish itself as a key GCF partner strategically supporting the transformation of the agriculture sector.

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