

Martyrs' Day (13th July 2022)

**By
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The sad saga of the people of Jammu and Kashmir is generally referred to as the unfinished agenda of the partition of British India. That is a big misunderstanding of the history of Jammu and Kashmir. The story begins in 1846 when through the Treaty of Amritsar of 19 March 1846, the British transferred the Kashmir Valley to Gulab Singh the Dogra ruler of Jammu, who were Hindus for what amounted to be a deed of sale of Rs, 7.5 million (Pounds 500,000/-). No regard was given to the inhabitants of the territory who, mostly Muslims, were practically also sold in this deal. They did not welcome this arrangement and started a movement of resistance against Dogra rule. Thus began a century of oppression on the people of Kashmir by Gulab Singh and his descendants that continued till the end of Dogra rule after the partition of Sub-Continent in 1947. Dogra atrocities included slave labour, heavy taxes, capital punishment for cow slaughter and interference in religious practices of the Muslims.

The year 1931 was a particularly important year in this movement when the feelings of the Kashmiri Muslims against the injustices of the Dogra rule were reaching their zenith. On July 13, 1931, thousands of people crowded the Central Jail Srinagar to witness the in-camera trial of Abdul Qadeer Khan. Qadeer was then an employee of an English Officer and he had made an impromptu speech to a crowd of Muslim protestors condemning the occupation of the state of Kashmir. He was arrested and judicial proceedings were initiated against him. As the time for obligatory prayer approached, a young Kashmiri stood for Azan. The Dogra Governor Ray Zada Tartilok Chand ordered soldiers to open fire at him. When he got martyred, another young man took his place and resumed the Azan from the verse it was broken following the martyrdom of first speaker. He was also shot dead. In this way, 22 Kashmiris embraced martyrdom in their efforts to complete the Azan.

The people carried the dead and paraded through the streets of Srinagar, chanting slogans against Dogra brutalities. Complete strike was observed in the city which was followed by a week-long mourning. This tragic incident shook the whole state and the traffic from Srinagar to Rawalpindi and Srinagar to Jammu came to halt from July 13 to 26, 1931. The 22 martyrs were buried in the Martyrs' Graveyard at Khawaja Bazar, Srinagar. The day, 13th July, continued to be observed as the Kashmir Martyr's day even after the partition until this was stopped by the current BJP government in India, following the illegal change of status of Jammu and Kashmir in the Indian constitution.

While the Dogra Raj has seen its days, the brutal acts of state-sponsored terrorism by Indian occupation forces in the IIOJ&K continue. Use of brutal force against the Kashmiri people, extra-judicial killings, custodial torture & deaths, forced disappearances, incarceration of Kashmiri leadership & youth and other methods of subjugation are haunting the valley of the occupied Kashmir. Through a Dossier unveiled last year, Pakistan has provided to the world, incontrovertible evidence of the gross and systemic oppression and human rights violations by

the Indian occupation forces in the IIOJK. Since 1989, Indian security forces have martyred over 100,000 Kashmiris, widowed 22,918 women, orphaned 107,798 children and molested or gang-raped 11,219 Kashmiri women. While the whereabouts of thousands of innocent youth subjected to disappearance in custody remain untraced, the discovery of thousands of mass graves across the territory has raised concerns about their safety.

India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5th August 2019 that are aimed at erasing the distinct identity of the people of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, have further fortified the Kashmiris' quest for freedom and self determination and lent even greater poignancy to the Kashmir Martyrs' Day. In an attempt to malign the history and tarnish the freedom struggle, the Government of India has abolished the public holiday "Martyrs' Day" in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The terrified Indian State and the apprehensive Indian Security Forces want to bulldoze every symbol of the freedom struggle. The history is, however, witness to the fact that the truth always tears apart the veils of darkness and. These acts of cowardice cannot destroy the spirit of the brave Kashmiris.

On this Martyr's Day, Pakistan has reaffirmed its resolve to help Kashmiris until fulfillment of their rights. Pakistan has called for investigation of extra-judicial killings in IIOJK by establishing an Independent Commission of Inquiry as recommended by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in its Kashmir reports of 2018 and 2019. Pakistan has also urged the international community to hold India responsible for its brazen suppression of innocent Kashmiris and play its due role in ensuring a just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

The Martyrs' Day marks an important milestone in the long struggle of Kashmiris for their right to self-determination. This day, the Kashmiris reaffirm their resolve to stand firm as a concrete wall against the occupying forces until they get their just freedom.
