

PRESS RELEASE

Kashmiris Press UN to Act on the 70th Anniversary of Human Rights Day Working Group on IMC Announced

London, 8th December 2017 – The Human Rights Day Roundtable was held under the auspices of International Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) and South Asia Centre for Peace and Human Rights (SACFPHR) in the William Sangster Room, Central Hall Westminster. The title of the conference was – Making Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts around the Globe Possible including Kashmir. The conference was organised to commemorate the upcoming Human Rights Day on 10th December 2017.



The Roundtable began with a video presentation titled “Bruised Paradise”. The presentation emphasised the ongoing conflicts that occur around the globe, including Kashmir, and continued to highlight the continued Media neglect of such conflicts around the world. The presentation was also constructed to reflect the 70th Anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Human Rights Day).

The Roundtable was chaired by **Victoria Schofield (Author, Historian, Journalist)** and in she stressed the importance of the discussion taking place in the afternoon as it reminds us of the importance of human rights around the globe particularly in reference to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The opening speaker in the plenary was **Barrister A. Majid Tramboo (Chairman, ICHR)**. In his inaugural speech, he stated that the discussion taking place was to commemorate and celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He stated that without advocacy for human rights there is no prosperity for success. He said the United Nations can only succeed if it promotes and protects human rights. He went to state the United Nations has placed solid mechanisms and that the question was whether

such mechanisms are effective in practice. Barrister Tramboo came to the conclusion that even with such extensive mechanisms, regrettably, human rights abuses are being perpetrated around the globe. He referred to the government of India's denial of the right to self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Anyone seeking such a right is termed as a terrorist. Barrister Tramboo remarked that the mass graves discovered and rapes of young and old women, in Konan Poshpora is still yet to be investigated despite a European Parliament resolution passed asking the government of India to do so. The message that Barrister Tramboo passed was: stand up for Kashmiris and stand up for their human rights.

In his concluding remarks, **Professor Nazir A. Shawl (Chairman, SACFPHR)** commented that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated loud and clear that every individual is deserving of the most fundamental and basic human rights. He went to reflect that despite the appropriate legislation in place which places human rights on a pedestal that ongoing abuses of those rights continue to date. With reference to Kashmir, Professor Shawl pronounced that Kashmiris are humans without human rights. He praised that despite the ongoing human rights violations in Kashmir, the people of Kashmir continue to demonstrate their resilience. This was emphasized in lieu of the recent use of pellet guns in Kashmir. He ended with *"free to sing the song of freedom, proclaiming the destined course awaiting them, to rewrite their destiny, free on their home soil to stand, so rise again Kashmir my motherland"*.



The Opening Roundtable Discussion was led by former MEP and co-founder of the German Greens, **Frank Schwalba-Hoth**. He pronounced that Brussels no longer had an effective Kashmir impact. He referred to the fact that ever since work in Brussels has ceased, there had been a lack of efficiency and impact in Brussels particularly in the European Parliament. Furthermore, he remarked that there was a need for more indigenous Kashmiris doing academic work on Kashmir. He went on to state that the importance of the European Parliament as mediators, policy making etc has shown how effective they can be as a body offering peaceful resolutions to conflicts around the world. This lead him on to state that counselling and mediation is necessary and the Parliament could be a broker of peace especially now as the time is right. He ended by stating that it is about time to commence meaningful discussions in the European Union.

Following on from Mr Schwalba-Hoth was **Soraya Boyd (CEO, Facilitate Global)** who coined the phrase that if there is no political courage then there is no political will and this phrase was continually emphasized throughout the afternoon by the Chair. Moreover, Ms Boyd went on to state that non-violence should be promoted as it a potent and powerful idea. She stressed to those watching and listening that we must remember that language and terminology used must not warp into that of an aggressor in light of conflict vs occupation. Therefore, this idea applies to the people of Kashmir and reinforces the resilience of the Kashmiri people who continue to express their right to self-determination peacefully.

After Ms Boyd, **Mohammed Altaf Khan (Sheriff and Lib Dem Spokesperson for Culture and Communities)** continued the Opening Roundtable Discussion by suggesting that the issue of Kashmir should be referred to the International Court of Justice so that the UN resolutions can be imposed in Kashmir. He also stated that there has to be interaction and dialogue between both sides of Kashmir.

PJ Mir (President, Din Media Group) addressed the audience by remarking that there is a need to acknowledge Kashmir as an outstanding issue. He went on to further state that possible solutions must be examined and explored which are acceptable to India and Pakistan but especially for Kashmiris and what is in their best interests. Mr Mir remarked that the issue of Kashmir had escalated factors such as poverty, destruction of social fabric, global warming, terrorism and more worryingly nuclear weapons.



The Second Roundtable Discussion was led by **Alaa Bayoumi (News Editor, Al Jazeera)** who commented that the media must remain neutral but must convey truth and facts. There is a moral duty and obligation of ethics towards reporting. He emphasized that the role of the media was to help viewers to understand what the conflict is about even if it cannot readily offer a solution. The role of the media is to help others understand and be a conduit of dialogue. As such it is necessary to convey the Kashmir issue in the media to illustrate the ongoing conflict so as to facilitate people in understanding the issue.

Tahir Aziz (South Asia Programme Director, Conciliation Resources) remarked that Conciliation Resources discussed various opinion polls. He went on to state that they compared these polls between past and present to ascertain how the public view conflict now. He remarked that people now prefer peaceful resolution over aggression as a means of

solving conflicts. Mr Aziz also stressed that there is a need to include conflicts that also occur in the west and not just the east alone, this would help to formulate effective strategies for resolution. Therefore, by observing issues on a global scale, this will aid in the Kashmiri plight to self-determination and develop effective strategies as emphasised by Mr Aziz.

The last speaker of the Discussion was **Mir Adnan Rahman (Faculty Member, AJK)** in which he remarked that peace, justice and prosperity are the bedrocks to solving conflicts peacefully around the globe. He stated that all rights are connected to the right to self-determination and that this right guarantees other rights around the globe. As such, if Kashmir attains their basic right to self-determination they will be entitled to other basic rights they are entitled to. He further maintained that according International Humanitarian Law, war of national liberation is termed as International Armed Conflict. Therefore, the atrocities in Kashmir are war crimes and crimes against humanity.



The Closing Roundtable Discussion was led by **Lord Duncan McNair (Chair – Peaceful Planet – Human Rights Education)** who stressed the need to educate people the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Education of the UDHR allows people to understand their own and other people's rights that they are entitled to. Furthermore, he stated that the need to engage all sides of conflict and give them training so they themselves restrain from illegal laws provided to them. He promulgated that if you focus on problems then you get more problems but if you focus on solutions then you have a chance of moving towards the right direction to resolving the conflict. Therefore, continuous emphasis on the problems of Kashmir will not lead to a direction of resolution. Rather, focusing on solutions will propel the Kashmir issue into the right direction.

Zubair Awan (Solicitor, President Advisory Committee HSPC) identified that one of the most difficult questions that a citizen faces is the difference between a terrorist and freedom fighter. He commented that one's freedom fighter is a terrorist to the other. He went to state this is down to preferential interpretations given and enforced by a state involved in the particular conflict over a global view. A consistent and systematic denial to international 'assistance' to help understand and resolve the conflict. He remarked this is exactly what happened in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. He pronounced there must be a principled response to the Kashmiris right to self-determination through a free and impartial plebiscite.

The Discussion was continued by **Hanif Qadir (CEO, Active Change Foundation)** who stressed that the Indian narrative allows killings and abuse of human rights. He went on to state that international language criminalises our own terminologies, he referred to the misuse of the word Jihad which is an act of defence and not a right to initiate war. He further stated that calling war on terror as war on Islam instigates people to react negatively and emotionally which causes them to fall into a trap of violence and extremism. Kashmiris are not terrorists and the people continually seek peaceful means to their right to self-determination therefore, the Kashmiris face a war on the people who are all multi-religious and multicultural and not a war on Islam.

Barrister David Mold (5 Pump Court, Human Rights Activist) stated that there is a need of an ongoing dialogue to solve any conflict around the globe. He continued by stating that there is a requirement educate people and those in power especially leaders of all sides. Therefore, it is for the government of India to listen and engage in open dialogue to effectively and peacefully resolve the Kashmir issue.

Graeme Wilson (Public Affairs Director, Church of Scientology) was the last speaker of the day and he emphasized that in conflict there is always a 3rd party, an instigator. Therefore, there is a need to find out who the instigator is and why they are instigating. The question then becomes who benefits from such conflicts. Once the identity of the instigator is revealed it becomes much easier for dialogue and resolution.

The Roundtable was summarised excellently by Victoria Scofield who chaired the Discussion brilliantly and expressed her gratitude to the speakers and participants.

Pursuant to the Declaration at the 21st September 2017 International Media Conference (IMC), Barrister Tramboo announced the formation of the **Working Group – International Media on Kashmir**. The founding members being **Victoria Schofield, Frank Schwalba-Hoth, Soraya Boyd, Betty Cleeren and PJ Mir – ex-officio members are Barrister Tramboo and Professor Shawl.**



The hashtag of the Roundtable is #K-SoonFreedom. And follow us on ICHRworld Twitter and Facebook and kashmirinsider.com