



Indo-American Kashmir Forum

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September 26, 2010

The Honorable Shri A. K. Antony
Defense Minister of India
Republic of India
New Delhi

Dear Defense Minister,

Kashmir valley is going through a difficult period. Lawlessness, anarchy and a weak state administration has allowed insurgent and radical Islamist groups to enforce an unbearable state of siege in the valley. Every morning, people wake to check the "Separatist Calendar" before planning their day. No society can look forward to such misery, and yet no Kashmiri is confident that he or she can be protected by the State against radical Islamist groups calling shots in the valley today.

Honorable Minister, I am the Overseas Coordinator of Kashmiri Pandits residing in the United States, United Kingdom and Europe. I work very closely with Pandit community in India, and we are very thankful to you, Sir, for having met with delegations of Pandit organizations based in New Delhi before and after the fateful meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) where it was rightly decided not to dilute any provisions of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) without further assessment and discussion. I personally join my Pandit colleagues in New Delhi in thanking you for your courageous stand.

Yesterday, the Home Minister announced a 8-point plan to address the unrest in the valley that was approved by the CCS. While I hope that the Central Government succeeds in its goals, the fact is that by ignoring Kashmiri Pandits who are also constituents of the valley, the plan falls short in its comprehensive goals, and therefore may not succeed.

Kashmiri Pandits are key to restoring plurality and religious temperance in the valley. Yet, no special effort is being made by the Government to assert that fact. In fact, the State Government has consistently made Pandit identity synonymous with Jammu based constituents. A township is being built for internally displaced Pandits in Jammu when it should be done in Srinagar. 3,000 new jobs were promised to Pandits in the valley, and none has been offered so far, in spite of various submissions and interviews by interested applicants. The State Government even issued an official circular two years back that a Bill will be passed in the State Assembly to hand over management of valley temples and shrines to Pandits but that never happened. Even a few cabinet berths in the State Government, provided in the past to the Pandit community, have been taken away. It is no brainer that the State Government behavior towards Kashmiri Pandits and especially their steady marginalization has been a key inspiration to growing fundamentalist forces in the valley.

You must have seen intelligence reports about how the separatist movement in Kashmir has evolved. Today's challenges go beyond pro-Pakistan and plebiscite demands. Kashmiri Muslims are being provoked to demand *Sharia* Law in Kashmir, and the presence of Indian military is being compared to American forces in Saudi Arabia, etc. The Central Government is making a big mistake by not creating political, economical, and physical security space for Kashmiri Pandits in the valley today. Indeed, the manner in which the All Party Delegation (APD) ignored the rights of Pandits in the valley was manifested by their refusal to meet with Kashmiri Pandits still living in the valley. Repeated demands by the valley based community were ignored. All meetings took place in Jammu, reinforcing non-valley identity of Kashmiri Pandits. On the other hand, the APD did meet with the Sikh community in Srinagar.

Honorable Minister, I request you and all your senior cabinet colleagues in the CCS to reconsider Government's approach towards the future of Kashmiri Pandits. In my humble view, India will pay a heavy



price if it continues to ignore the strategic asset that Kashmiri Pandits provide in strengthening India's national identity and national security in Jammu and Kashmir.

I am requesting you to please intervene on behalf of all the minority communities in the Kashmir valley.

Thank you.

With my highest regards,

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vijay K. Sazawal".

Vijay K. Sazawal, Ph.D.
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THE HINDU

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Overseas Kashmiri Pandits submit memorandum to Antony

PTI

Kashmiri Pandits based in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada have submitted a memorandum to visiting Defence Minister A.K. Antony, saying that India is making “a big mistake” by not creating political, economical and physical security space for the community in the Valley.

“The Central Government is making a big mistake by not creating political, economical and physical security space for Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley today,” Vijay K. Sazawal, international coordinator at Indo-American Kashmir Forum said in the memorandum, which was also submitted on behalf of various other overseas Kashmiri Pandit groups from Canada and Britain.

“Indeed, the manner in which the All Party Delegation (APD) ignored the rights of Pandits in the Valley was manifested by their refusal to meet with Kashmiri Pandits still living in the Valley. Repeated demands by the Valley-based community were ignored,” he said.

Mr. Sazawal said all meetings took place in Jammu, “reinforcing non—Valley identity” of Kashmiri Pandits.

“On the other hand, the APD did meet with the Sikh community in Srinagar,” he said in his letter yesterday.

“... Home Minister (P Chidambaram) announced an 8-point plan to address the unrest in the Valley that was approved by the CCS (Cabinet Committee on Security). While I hope that the Central Government succeeds in its goals, the fact is that by ignoring Kashmiri Pandits who are also constituents of the Valley, the plan falls short in its comprehensive goals, and therefore may not succeed,” the memorandum said.

Kashmiri Pandits are key to restoring “plurality and religious temperance” in the Valley, Mr. Sazawal said.

“Yet, no special effort is being made by the Government to assert that fact. In fact, the State Government has consistently made Pandit identity synonymous with Jammu—based constituents,” he alleged.

The memorandum thanked the Defence Minister for taking the “courageous stand” at the CCS where it was decided not to dilute any provisions of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act without further assessment and discussions.

“India will pay a heavy price, if it continues to ignore the strategic asset that Kashmiri Pandits provide in strengthening India’s national identity and national security in Jammu and Kashmir,” the memorandum said.

