

Mr V K Sazawal
National President
Indo-American Kashmir Forum
14015 Hartley Hall Place
Darnestown
MD 20874

United States of America

Att: Mr Sazawal

27th May 2002

Dear Mr Sazawal

Thank you for your letter of May 13th 2002, which, of course, takes on extra importance in today's situation.

The symmetrical dialogue approach that you outline in your letter is something that PRIO is much in favour of, and I understand that there are some interesting proposals coming up both in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and in Jammu and Kashmir at the moment, which really deserve international support. If it were possible to get out of the current crisis in a way that could stop the escalation of violence, and allow all parties to take part in the September elections in Jammu and Kashmir, then possibilities might open up for more local peace initiatives.

It is therefore with regret that I must admit how difficult it is for PRIO to involve itself actively in efforts to establish peace in Kashmir. First, PRIO is not a funding agency. It receives funding for its projects from various sources, notably the Norwegian Foreign Ministry. There are no funds allocated to sponsoring additional activities to our existing project work. And secondly, we also have very little in-house expertise on South Asia.

Regrettably, we therefore have very little to offer you and your cause. However, please be aware that although PRIO has little to offer at this time, especially in the financial sense, I am eager to be kept informed of any developments in the situation in Kashmir, and of any progress that you may have with your symmetrical dialogue approach.

Yours sincerely



Stein Tønnesson

Director, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)

Fuglehauggata 11
NO-0260 Oslo
Norway

T: +47 22 54 77 00
F: +47 22 54 77 01

info@prio.no
<http://www.prio.no>

Bank account:
8200.01.44904
Union Bank of Norway
Swift: UBNONOKK

Postal Giro Account:
0813 20 07250

Enterprise number:
NO 847 353 732 MVA



Indo-American Kashmir Forum

www.KashmirForum.com

Vijay K. Sazawal, Ph.D.
National President
vks@KashmirForum.com

May 13, 2002

Mr. Stein Tonnesson, Director
International Peace Research Institute Oslo (IPRIO)
Fuglehauggatte #11
N0 – 0260, Oslo
Norway

Dear Mr. Tonnesson,

I am writing to you after consultations with Mr. Walter Andersen of the U.S. State Department, who in fact was kind enough to give me your name and address.

To set the stage for what I have to say, let me first introduce myself. I am a U.S. citizen of Kashmiri origin. I was born of Kashmiri parents in Srinagar about 56 years back. I was raised in Kashmir and completed my pre-professional studies there. I am married to a Kashmiri woman and the marriage took place in Srinagar in 1970. My parents and my in-laws lived in the valley until the insurgency of 1990. I am a resident of the U.S. for 32 years and I have been active on human rights issues related to Kashmir for over a decade.

I am a Kashmiri Pandit (KP), which means that I am a member of the minority community in Kashmir. Our organization was established to highlight the plight of religious minorities in Kashmir, especially in light of the Islamic terrorism beginning in mid-1980's, though it was not until 1990 that it made world headlines. Many of my relatives became victims (including abduction and murder), and survivors are scattered all over India. My father died during the forced exodus out of the State. Our organization has faulted the Indian and J&K governments for their poor treatment of Kashmiris languishing in various makeshift refugee camps today. Please visit our organization website: www.KashmirForum.com to learn more about our organization's objectives and goals.

Over the last decade, I have also tried to examine other aspects of the Kashmir issue, and in particular two: why is the Kashmir problem so intractable and how different are various issues confronting Kashmiris on both sides of the LAC?

In the last decade I have met and discussed my concerns with literally hundreds of Kashmiris, all constituents of the Jammu and Kashmir (either from the Indian

14015 Hartley Hall Place, Darnestown, MD 20874
Phone 202.468.7222 ♦ Fax 301.208.0743



side or from the Pakistani side) in Washington, London, Geneva, the Hague, and in the J&K State itself. An overwhelming majority of my discussions have been with Muslims - from the valley, Azad Kashmir, Northern Areas, Gujjars, etc.

On the basis of these conversations, as well as my discussions with non-Muslims of Kashmir, I have concluded that there is no holistic solution to the Kashmir problem. So where it is appealing to talk about an “independent and united Kashmir” or talk of a dialogue involving Kashmiris from both sides of the LAC, the reality is that other than grabbing headlines such discussions mean nothing in terms of changes in the ground situation. Even among militants operating on both sides of the LAC, there is no convergence of views either as evidenced by the recent split in the *Hizbul Mujahideen*. Similarly, putting all the attention on Indian Kashmir, while ignoring NEARLY IDENTICAL situation in Pakistani Kashmir, is a non-starter in terms of bring lasting peace and tranquility to the region.

I believe what can start a true peace process is to start with actual ground realities and build on things that are possible and which are achievable. I am calling this process the “Symmetrical Dialogue” on Kashmir. I believe the Indian government will not be averse to it (since it highlights the plight of both Kashmiris), and Pakistani government should support it (since it has a focus on reducing civilian casualties in Indian Kashmir). But in any case, the dialogue that I am suggesting is very precise with focussed topics of discussion to be discussed among the representatives of two Kashmiris SEPARATELY, since resolution paths may be different in the two regions. My plan also calls for participants to be knowledgeable about the laws and economy of their portion of Kashmir so that the dialogue does not degenerate into polemics and establishes specific goals for the preliminary dialogue.

I have shared my views with the U.S. Department of State as well as with the South Asian office of the U.S. National Security Council (NSC). Both departments found the proposal interesting and a departure from the usual. I have also had three opportunities to speak about the same plan in front of three very different audiences. On February 28, I spoke to a mostly academic audience at the James A. Baker Institute for Public Policy of Rice University on this subject. On April 6, I presented my approach at the symposium arranged by the National Advisory Council on South Asian Affairs (NACSA) in Washington, DC that was also attended by official representatives of India and Pakistan. Indeed, following that meeting, Mr. Masood Khan of the Embassy of Pakistan suggested to me that I should interact with Kashmiris from the Pakistani side of Kashmir to share my ideas. I did just that in the following week, on April 11, in Geneva. My talk was titled, “Resolving Human Rights and Political Issues in Jammu and Kashmir by Local Empowerment”, and was attended by Kashmiris from both sides of the LAC, as well as by Swiss, Indian, Pakistani and American nationals. It is because of the positive response especially from the last two meetings that I feel time is ripe to approach you and seek your support for the proposal.



Let me briefly reiterate the key elements of the proposal:

1. Sanctity of the LAC is key to regional stability. The final boundary between India and Pakistan can only be settled through a peaceful dialogue. In the end, it is unlikely though that the final solution will result in an “all or nothing” outcome. Since neither country supports an independent J&K, It is reasonable to expect that the State will be partitioned. In any case, partition of Kashmir is a reality even today. So the Kashmir problem is really two problems.
2. The people issues are two-fold. First, there is an armed insurgency fueled by Islamic zealots that has brought death and destruction to populace and has led to harsh response from the security forces. While India is under considerable pressure to clean up its act, the likelihood of diminished violence will depend on the global war on terrorism. It is not obvious that Indian unilateral actions or even a change of heart by indigenous militants can really change the ground situation in Kashmir without the U.S. leadership in winning the war on terrorism. Thus, political processes in two Kashmirs must follow an independent track, separate from the war on terrorism (e.g., as in Afghanistan), to make it more representative, as well as accommodative, in both Kashmirs.
3. Second issue deals with political aspirations and good governance. As much as the focus is on Indian side of Kashmir, the reality is that such problems exist on both sides of Kashmir. I feel that in both Kashmirs, there has been a concerted effort by *Sunni* Muslims to relegate other sections of the Kashmiri society to a less-than-equal status, resulting in political imbalances like the situation in the Northern Areas or In Ladakh and Jammu. Indeed, one can argue that *Sunni* hegemony is a common denominator on both sides of Kashmir that neither the J&K National Conference (NC), nor the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) or the J&K Muslim Conference (MC) are willing to admit. Of course, *Sunnis* like to divert attention elsewhere, but the reality is that feudal politics is a way of life in both Kashmirs, and factors such as lack of accountability and a lack of transparency are as much a source of public dissatisfaction as police excesses and militant violence.
4. Given these factors, there is every reason to believe that genuine devolution of power held by the a few *Sunni* families leading to an equitable power sharing between the State constituents will go a long way in alleviating the plight of Kashmirs on both sides of the LAC. Such democratization will ensure accountability, transparency and good governance in both Kashmiris.
5. The key to open and better governance is holding an inter-constituent dialogue for each Kashmir, separately. The United States must seek symmetry in ensuring that such a dialogue proceeds at a relatively similar pace in so far as both Kashmirs are concerned. Indeed, one of the outcomes



of the inter-constituent dialogue can be the agenda for federal-state negotiations in each part of Kashmir.

6. The “symmetrical inter-constituent dialogue” should be conducted in phases. In the first phase, selected intellectuals representing various constituencies will develop a detailed road map for ensuring the success of such a dialogue, to which major political leaders can be added in the subsequent phase.

I hope IPRIO can help facilitate the process of negotiations as outlined above and sponsor the symmetrical dialogue. The two inter-constituent dialogue teams should be provided with identical terms of reference, and a nearly similar framework and schedule to arrive at key decision points in a symmetrical manner. It is likely that you and your organization may wish to refine the approach and develop other tools to facilitate the symmetrical dialogue.

I would like to get your feedback on this proposal and, separately, your views on whether IPRIO can sponsor such a dialogue. I believe Kashmir is too important an issue to ignore, and yet day in and day out people seem to be stuck in the same groove in so far as solution paths are concerned. We have to break the paradigm. I believe my proposal does just that. I am convinced that the majority of those suffering on both sides of the LAC want to look beyond the real estate and focus attention on bringing peace and economic prosperity to both Kashmirs, far removed from Machiavellian games that Kashmiri politicians and others in the Indian and Pakistani government machinery have exploited for the last 55 years.

Thank you for your time and patience. I will look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vijay K. Sazawal'.

V. K. Sazawal

Attachments:

1. Human Rights and Political Issues in Divided Jammu and Kashmir.
2. Preliminary List of White Papers to be generated through the first phase of the Symmetrical Dialogue.
3. Preliminary set of documents to be read by Intellectuals attending the first Symmetrical Dialogue.

I have also included a related presentation at a Seminar that was published by the Outlook India newsmagazine.



HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL ISSUES IN DIVIDED JAMMU AND KASHMIR

1. Political power controlled by *Sunni* oligarchy (both sides).
2. Disproportionate allocation of political and economic power between regions (both sides).
3. Poor governance, high corruption, lack of transparency and public accountability (both sides).
4. Economic development impeded by declaring Northern Areas as a Military Zone (Pakistani side).
5. Economic development impeded by isolationist attributes of the Article 370 (Indian side).
6. Lack of plurality in shaping regional priorities that are inclusive of all ethnic and religious minorities (both sides).
7. *Mujahideen* training camps engaged in cross-border terrorism (Pakistani side).
8. Islamic terrorism, insurgency and harsh security measures resulting in civilian casualties (Indian side).
9. *Madrassas* teaching violence and incompatibility with non-believers (both sides).
10. Internally displaced people (both sides, with significant numbers on the Indian side).
11. Lack of fiscal responsibility and extra-ordinary reliance on federal grants (both sides).
12. Weak civil society with poor checks and balances, compounded by local Press that financially survives on local government subsistence (both sides).

PLEASE NOTE THAT EVEN THOUGH SIMILAR PROBLEMS EXIST IN BOTH KASHMIRS, THE SOLUTIONS MAY NOT BE THE SAME, AS THESE HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED THROUGH LOCAL CONDITIONS IN EACH KASHMIR.



**PRELIMINARY LIST OF WHITE PAPERS TO BE GENERATED THROUGH
THE FIRST PHASE OF THE SYMMETRICAL DIALOGUE**

(Two teams will generate separate White Papers)

1. Changes in local laws to improve transparency, accountability and governance.
2. Actions to eliminate terrorism and harsh security measures.
3. Actions necessary to improve the civil society.
4. Implications of folding the Northern Areas into Jammu and Kashmir (Pakistani side).
5. Implications of deleting or strengthening some or all of the Article 370 (Indian side).
6. Actions necessary to ensure free and open general elections.
7. Equitable devolution of political and economic power among regions.
8. Improvements in fiscal responsibility and financial management.
9. Framework for State-Center dialogue.
10. Participation in follow-on phases of the Symmetrical Dialogue.



**PRELIMINARY LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS FOR THE
SYMMETRICAL DIALOGUE**

(Each Team will review material appropriate to their side of J&K)

1. The State Constitution and the Federal Constitution (parts relevant to State-Center relationship).
2. The State Economic Development Database.
3. The latest State Annual Budget.