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GENEVA ASSOCIATION OF UNITED NATIONS CORRESPONDENTS

*Palais des Nations, Genève*

PRESS BRIEFING

A group of leaders of organisations representing the Pandit (Hindu) population of Jammu and Kashmir will give a briefing in the ACANU library today, Monday February 14 at 3 p.m.

Present will be Dr Ajay Chungroo, official spokesman of the Panun Kashmir organisation, Dr Vijay Sazawal, National President of the Indo-American Kashmiri Forum, Mr Autar Tikoo of the Indo-European Kashmir Forum, and Mr Moti Kaul, President of the Kashmiri Pandit Association of Bombay.

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Pandit Hindus, the largest minority in mainly Moslem Kashmir, complained on Monday that Moslem militants had driven nearly all Hindus from the Kashmir Valley with a brutal campaign of "ethnic cleansing".

They told a press conference here that more than 300,000 Pandits, nearly 99 percent of the total had been driven out of the Kashmir Valley since 1989 and were now forced to live as refugees in camps.

Spokesman Ajay Chrungoo said Hindus wanted the UN Human Rights Commission to send a "fact-finding mission" to Kashmir to investigate "ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Kashmiri Hindu minority".

Vijay Sazawal, chairman of the Hindu-American Forum, said Indian authorities had failed to come to the aid of the Pandits for "political" reasons because they were anxious to avoid inflaming religious antagonism in the state.

He said the Pandits were victims of "Pakistan-sponsored terrorism on one hand, on the other by a lack of commitment on the part of the government of India".

The Pandits told journalists they were appealing to the "world conscience" because they feared the present situation would lead to the gradual disappearance of their cultural identity.

"There can be no lasting solution of the Kashmir crisis unless Kashmiri

Pandits are involved in all aspects of the political process," they said. lub/jb/g

AFP

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# Indian Express

FROM AHMEDABAD BANGALORE BARODA BOMBAY CHANDIGARH COIMBATORE DELHI HYDERABAD KOCHI KOZHIKODE MADRAS MAI

● VIJAYAWADA, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1994

## Pandits to take issue to UN panel

by Chitra Subramaiam

GENEVA - The Government of India will come under fresh fire this week when Kashmiri Pandits tell the United Nations Human Rights Commission that New Delhi has "violated their rights, choosing instead to appease Islamic fundamentalist forces" in their State.

"Since 1947, the Indian Government has been legitimising communal politics in Jammu and Kashmir. The result is that the State is overrun by terrorists determined to destroy secular and democratic forces," said Ajay Chrangoo, spokesman for Panun Kashmir, a Jammu and New Delhi-based umbrella organisation of the Kashmiri Pandit diaspora.

**Story of subversion:** "The Kashmir problem is not just one of guns. It is also the story of subversion from within led by National Conference and Farooq Abdullah. It is the story of how the entire State machinery was allowed to be held hostage by Islamic militants because National Conference wanted to remain in power," he added.

Chrangoo, a medical doctor who fled under threat of death, lives in a refugee camp in Jammu. "Even now, we say Kashmir is not lost. If India can isolate the fundamentalist forces, a solution can be found. But by negotiating with National Conference, New Delhi is seeking once again to appease the Sunni Muslim community to the detriment of all else," he said.

The Pandits, who are here for the first time, are represented by Chrangoo, Vijay K. Sazawal, president of the Indo-American Kashmiri Forum, and Moti Kaul from Bombay, who will take turns to address the commission.

"We have come here to fill in blanks. We want to tell the world that the Kashmir problem is not just a Sunni Muslim problem but a much larger issue involving an ethnic mix that is secular and democratic," said Sazawal. He added that neither the Hindus, nor the Shias nor the Gujjar Bakkarwals who account for 65 per cent of the people in the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have any faith in the NC. "But if you send Farooq Abdullah to talk about human rights violations in Kashmir, what message are you sending out?" he asked.

**Farooq's presence irks:** The Pandits, who said Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao as well as BJP leader L. K. Advani had declined to meet them in Delhi, are now seeking an appointment with A. B. Vajpayee, who is part of the Indian delegation to the session.

"We want to tell him our problem, and we have one question for him - how can he share a platform with Farooq Abdullah, especially one that discusses human rights," said Chrangoo. The Pandits appear irked by the presence of Abdullah, "because we think he is part of the problem and not the solution to the Kashmiri issue."

The former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir is also one of India's official delegates to the Human Rights Commission. "He says here now that Pakistan armed and trained his boys - why was he not saying this in 1988 and 1989 when he was chief minister?" asked Kaul.

**In a conversation with Indian Express,** the representatives said their primary aim was to bring human rights violations against Kashmiri Pandits to international

attention.

**Systematic campaign:** "A systematic campaign of kill-and-terrorise, which started in the second half of 1989 and reached a climax by the middle of 1990, has led to the exodus of an entire people," Sazawal said, adding that some 7,000,000 Pandits remained displaced in India and abroad. Panun Kashmir is demanding that the area north and east of Jhelum be given to the Pandits as their homeland.

Chrangoo, who will address the Commission early this week, said neither the Government nor the opposition parties in India had spoken up for the Pandits, an apathy that was also reflected in the international community. "It baffles me why internationally reputed organisations like Amnesty International or Asia Watch, who visited Kashmir valley, could not pay even a single visit to the camps where thousands of Pandits are living since 1990," he said.

**Not considered important:** "The only conclusion we can draw is that we are not considered important - so it is about time we took our destiny in our own hands," said Sazawal. He added that they were in touch with US administration officials, including Robin Raphael in a desperate bid to make their case. "She told us that our problem was that even the Indian Government does not take us seriously," he said.

Sazawal claims several American officials told him they thought the National Conference was no alternative to the violence in Kashmir. "You have to examine the National Conference's track record - it is evident the situation deteriorated dramatical-

ly when they were in power in 1987-89."

While the delegation is focusing primarily on human rights violations, they are also stated to use their presence here to tell the world community that Pakistan's direct help to terrorists in the Kashmir valley has been adequately documented by several independent Indian and international observers.

"And there is enough evidence to show that Pakistan succeeded in terrorising the State because there was subversion from within, and because the National Conference tried to keep all its options open with the singular aim of remaining in power," said Chrangoo.

One of Panun Kashmir's central demands is that all official documents, including intelligence reports exchanged between New Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir from the mid-eighties, be made public. "That way, we can identify the culprits as well as the institutions that contributed to making Jammu and Kashmir a haven for terrorists," he said. "The real problem is whether India wants Kashmir to be a secular State or wants to shut its eyes to Jammu and Kashmir being run by the writ of the militants under the laws of the Shariat now being enacted in full vigour and gusto," Chrangoo said.

The Pandits are also seeking appointments with senior Indian politicians scheduled to address the Commission in the coming weeks. "If New Delhi is thinking of initiating a dialogue, which includes greater autonomy for the State of Jammu and Kashmir, we want to have the option of deciding our future," said Sazawal.

## What the Success at Geneva Means for Kashmiri Pandits

Vijay Kumar Sazawal  
Indo-American Kashmir Forum

March 9, 1994 was an auspicious day for the Kashmiri Pandits (KPs). Besides celebrating Shivratri, KPs had another reason to be jubilant. That historic day was the concluding day of the 50th session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) in Geneva, and Pakistan was running out of steam and time. The resolution on Kashmir, which the Pakistanis had put forth on February 25 (virtually identical to the resolution they had proposed and withdrawn last year in New York), had to come for a vote or be withdrawn. Pakistan, sensing defeat, requested a ninety minute delay just before the 9:00 AM roll call. At 10:30 AM they asked for another postponement to 1 PM. Finally, at 3:00 PM, having been told that some of their co-sponsors had changed their minds, Pakistan dejectedly withdrew the resolution. India had won a great diplomatic victory. The Indian Press, always ready to heap praise on the dubious politicians, singled out one or the other politician for the triumph in Geneva, calling X or Y the "hero of the hour." However, they were wrong.

If there is any hero/heroine of the hour, and indeed there are many, it is the Kashmiri Pandit. Not an individual, but collectively everyone who was there -- from the brave lady who held her ground in spite of a misguided Home Ministry official's request to tone down her speech to the courteous humanist who even hugged the Jamaat-i-Islami's "numero uno" in the US (Ghulam Nabi Shah *urf* Fai). This odd assortment of KP refugees, bureaucrats, technocrats, doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, and professors, both men and women-- did a superb job of which every KP anywhere in the world should be proud. Together, they made the difference. Even though they came in ones and twos over a six week period from all over the world, and had diverse political and professional backgrounds, they were identical in expressing the pain, suffering and humiliation to which our community has been subjected for the last four years. While some gave speeches, others countered anti-India arguments by holding meetings with most of the 53 nation delegations as well as the important non-governmental organizations (NGOs) present. The NRI Pandits especially targeted the permanent members of the Security Council. Together, all of them created an intellectual force that overwhelmed the odds and turned the situation around in India's favor. Yes, they are the true heroes and heroines of the Geneva meeting.

There were also those who did not go to Geneva, but nevertheless, were deeply

involved. From the United States, we had KPs who worked hard on arranging the first of its kind press conference in Palais des Nations, Geneva. KP representatives from the Panun Kashmir (PK), the Indo-American Kashmir Forum (IAKF), and the Indo-European Kashmir Forum (IEKF) held a press conference in the UN Press Room that was attended by the UN press corps and reported internationally. The group talked about Pakistan's nefarious role, Islamic fundamentalism, ethnic cleansing, Farooq Abdullah's misrule, etc. Also, following the visit of the Ambassadors from the European Union (EU) to the valley, some KPs in the USA went on a massive letter writing campaign to the European capitals as a follow-up to the visit. Even though these dedicated workers of IAKF did not travel to Geneva, they are every bit heroes ( no heroines in this group) as the Geneva participants. No salutation will be complete without commending the generous hospitality and warm welcome provided to the visiting biradari by the KP families residing in Geneva.

There is a deliberate reason why I have not named names. Names are not important. We have to get past the names and the degrees awarded and the high positions attained and the social and cultural accolades received. We have to think as a community willing to consider even the most unfortunate of us as important as the ones who served various Prime Ministers. Together we can make the difference, a fact very much demonstrated in Geneva.

March 19, 1994