

## **YEF Analysis on Indian govt. removing special status of Kashmir**

Kashmir, a beautiful valley situated in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent, has always been a disputed area between Pakistan and India. Due to its critical geographical position, Kashmir is claimed by both the countries to be ruled by their respective governments. The northern and western parts of the valley administered and are occupied by India. Before the year of 1947, the valley of Kashmir was declared a princely state with a chance to either be a part of Pakistan or to remain with India. Due to the indecisiveness by the ruler, it was declared a disputed area after 1947 with both countries trying to claim control over the region. This was despite the United Nations intervention in 1948 to separate Kashmir into two areas with a boundary. Various attempts and agreements have been made to solve the Kashmir issue including three wars fought in 1947, 1965 and 1999 and the international community has tried to play their part over time, yet this issue remains unresolved and a source of historical conflict in the subcontinent.

The government of Modi, in yet another move to destabilize peace in the region and to appease its Hindu vote bank, has scrapped the Article 370 and Article 35A from its constitution through a presidential order issued on August 5. As a result, the special status was granted to Indian Occupied Kashmir that gave special anatomy to its people that has been taken away. Moreover, the state proposes the reorganization of the region into two union territories: Jammu & Kashmir – with its Hindu majority population which will have its own legislature and assembly and Ladakh – home to a Muslim majority which will be ruled directly by the Federal Government.

The Article 370 gives special status to the territory. It allows the state a constituent assembly and to have its own constitution. For seven decades, Kashmir has governed itself through its own laws except in the matters of defense, external affairs, finance and communication. On the other hand, as per Article 35A the citizens of the rest of India are excluded from buying property, making financial investments, seeking permanent settlement, government employment and academic scholarships in Kashmir. This law constitutionally safeguards the financial control and independence of Indian occupied Kashmiris. The removal of these articles allows Indians a free hand to make investments, settle down in Kashmir and get jobs, encouraging immigration into the region and therefore threatening the Muslim population to lose its majority status. Moreover, all laws of the Indian constitution will be applicable to the state of Kashmir.

This move by the Modi government is highly undemocratic as it is a clear violation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution and international laws and is being criticized on both the national and global stage. As per order, security troops have been deployed by Indian authorities and Kashmiri leaders have been put under house arrest. This will cause rage among Kashmir's inhabitants, leading to resistance, extremism and further bloodshed in the valley. Furthermore, it is a unilateral step taken by the Indian government without the consultation of the Pakistani state, implicating a serious security risk for the region. India seems intended to create tension on the Line of Control which can lead to a potential war with its rival neighbor.

With greater escalation, the Pakistani state may be looking at a potential refugee crisis. There are already approximately 38,000 refugees from Indian occupied Kashmir in camps on the Pakistani side. The unrest in Jammu and Kashmir caused by the Modi government's steps to an apparent solution is likely to increase these numbers; a matter of unfavorable consequence for Pakistan's already failing economy. Pakistan will have to deliberate the potentially inevitable consequence of more Indian occupied Kashmiris crossing the border.

To reach effective course of action, the governing and oppositional political parties of Pakistan need forget their political differences to unite on this issue and arrive to a collective consensus to prevent further escalation of a security risk. Pakistan must protest on this issue at international forums such as the United Nations and OIC and keep the matter at utmost regional and international importance. Making efforts for the Kashmiri people to give their due rights is the need of the hour because stability in Kashmir will lead to the economic and political progress of the subcontinent and ease geopolitical tensions – a particularly favorable situation for Pakistan.