

Kashmir: Humanitarian Crises - Challenges and Way forward

Indian-administered Kashmir is once again in turmoil and majority of the cities, towns and villages often put under curfews and search operations by security forces to contain mass protests against human rights violations and civil resistance movement in Kashmir.

The right to life, liberty, security of person and livelihoods of the civilian population in the most militarised disputed countries in the world: Jammu Kashmir is at risk on daily basis. Human rights organisations and international media reports suggest that over 17,000 adults and children have been injured, [nearly eight thousand have been arrested](#), and an entire population spent the winter of 2016-17 under the longest curfew in the history of curfews in Kashmir. The [Guardian reported](#) India's crackdown in Kashmir: is this the world's first mass blinding? In April 2017, on a day when Government of India assured Supreme Court that pellet guns were being used as "absolute last resort" in Kashmir, SMHS hospital was treating as many as [20 new cases of eyes ruptured by the deadly pellets](#). Over 1200 civilians have been blinded and 145 civilians have been killed by security forces in Indian occupied Kashmir since the [mass protest started on 9th July 2016](#).

In the [opening statement](#) at the 33rd session of the Human Rights Council H.E. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed regret at the failure of Indian and Pakistani authorities to grant his office access to Jammu and Kashmir for a fact-finding visit. "Without access, we can only fear the worst," he said.

In four months since July 8th, 2016, the records of SMHS hospital and SKIMS Medical College Hospital in Srinagar indicates that 1178 persons admitted with injuries in their eyes by pellet gun shots fired by security forces. The number of civilian injured through the indiscriminate use of pellet guns by security forces is growing every day. Despite the [calls from the civil society, national and international human rights organisation](#) there are no signs of ending this inhumane practice by security forces because [Indian Army](#) considers pellet gun use as 'least lethal'. 119 people were killed due to pellet injuries or indiscriminate firing between Jul-Sep 2016.

A professor at the Government Medical College Srinagar described the plight of the survivors of the pellet injuries as "this [epidemic of dead or dying eyes](#) is the largest in the world caused by unnatural causes. Nowhere in history will one find anything comparable to this". There is very little specialist medical assistance available in the valley to help and treat the survivors of pellet injuries. The delivery of international humanitarian and medical aid directly in Kashmir is near impossible due to strict limitations on such intervention imposed by Indian Government and lack of the international community response to alleviate sufferings of the people of Jammu and Kashmir

However, the resilience of Kashmiri people and the civil society's humanitarian action has been keeping the candles of hope alight for the survivors of the enforced blindness in Kashmir.

KDF has commissioned a baseline survey for needs assessment of the visually impaired pellet survivors in Kashmir. Help Foundation has completed the survey on 15th March 2017 with the help of volunteers and local NGOs in 10 districts of Kashmir (Srinagar, Budgam, Baramulla, Bandipora, Kupwara, Pulwama, Kulgam, Shopian, Ganderbal, and Anantnag).

Five hundred thirty-five (535) visually impaired pellet survivors have been directly engaged during two months mapping exercise to assess the needs of these survivors. In addition to this primary data, secondary data has been collected from State Police Department, Health Department, State Human Rights Commission and local NGO's who



worked in the hospitals to support victims during the unrest and other non-government reports of Jammu and Kashmir.

The analysis of the primary data based on the survey results of 535 visually impaired pellet survivors found that:

- **91% survivors of pellet injuries are visually impaired in one eye**
- **9% survivors of pellet injuries are visually impaired in both eyes**

Age Gender and Marital Status	Education level	Survivors residence District wise																					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22% survivors are aged between 7-17 years • 76% Survivors are aged between 18-40 years • 2% survivors are between aged 40-70 years • 97% male • 3 % female • 83% unmarried • 16% married • 1% divorced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2% Survivors are post graduates 10 % survivors are Graduates 22% Higher Secondary 25% Matriculate 21% Primary 2 % Middle/Technical education 18% No formal education 	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Kupwara</td><td>8%</td></tr> <tr><td>Baramulla</td><td>22%</td></tr> <tr><td>Bandipora</td><td>8%</td></tr> <tr><td>Kulgam</td><td>5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Pulwama</td><td>22%</td></tr> <tr><td>Shopian</td><td>10%</td></tr> <tr><td>Anantnag</td><td>5%</td></tr> <tr><td>Budgam</td><td>7%</td></tr> <tr><td>Ganderbal</td><td>1%</td></tr> <tr><td>Srinagar</td><td>12%</td></tr> </table>	Kupwara	8%	Baramulla	22%	Bandipora	8%	Kulgam	5%	Pulwama	22%	Shopian	10%	Anantnag	5%	Budgam	7%	Ganderbal	1%	Srinagar	12%	
Kupwara	8%																						
Baramulla	22%																						
Bandipora	8%																						
Kulgam	5%																						
Pulwama	22%																						
Shopian	10%																						
Anantnag	5%																						
Budgam	7%																						
Ganderbal	1%																						
Srinagar	12%																						

Below are brief case studies of individual pellet injury survivors collated as part of the research.

On 2 September 2016, Friday, Shakeela Begum, who is divorced with five-year-old kid, was hit by pellets fired by forces which pierced both her eyes. Shakeela can no more see his five-year-old grooming. She has pellets on her tongue, shoulders and face, this pellet victim says she ran towards her home when pellets hit her. "I came running screaming 'Faheem' (her son) and ran back screaming Allah's name," she shudders. Living with her brother, this 35-year-old woman says her son is all that she has got. "He is my only child, the only reason for me to live," she goes on.

On 14 August 2016, Irshad Ahmed Malla, whose father Ghulam Nabi Malla is suffering from paralysis, was hit by pellets in his right eye. Irshad's family is living under abject poverty and has no source of income to meet the expenses of his treatment.

On 26 August, 2016, Shafat Ahmed Lone son of Late Mohammed Ashraf Lone of Nowpora Jageer Baramulla was hit by pellets when he was mourning his grandfather's death. Forces chased away protestors and fired indiscriminately and pellets rain inside the tent hitting Lone's right eye. Three times he was taken to Amritsar for treatment but vision couldn't not be restored. Mr Lone's father was killed in 1995 by unknown gunmen and left two kids and widowed wife behind. Now Lone is left in state of trauma and pain after pellets shattered his dreams. Lone is married with one kid.

Firdous Ahmad Dar, 25 year old was the sole bread earner of the family of five and earned his living by driving an auto rickshaw in Sopore town. Firdous, is one among those innocents who were accidentally hit by pellets without being involved. He was the only ray of hope for his family, especially two younger siblings who are studying in 9th and 5th grades respectively. Firdous, was flown to Delhi by Government for specialized eye treatment, but he was sent back to home after three months for further evaluation, without any surgical Intervention at the Rajinder Prasad Institute of Ophthalmic Sciences, AIIMS, New Delhi. His attendant said, "They didn't operate upon him in the eyes. They just prescribed medicines.



[Kashmir Development Foundation](#) (KDF) is one of the few international charities managed to establish a partnership with one of the most effective local NGOs [HELP Foundation](#), J&K and formally signed a memorandum of understanding on 10th January 2017 for a joint humanitarian aid project for the rehabilitation of visually impaired persons in Kashmir.

HELP Foundation has been delivering humanitarian aid and emergency relief for the survivors of pellet injuries at different hospitals, and provided medico-surgical supplies and deployed its team of counselors and social workers, especially SMHS (Shri Maharaja Hari Singh) hospital where the flow of patients is comparatively high. HELP Foundation supported 38 survivors in their treatment at India's top most hospital- LV Prasad Eye Specialist Hospital, Hyderabad. Furthermore, HELP Foundation provides ambulance services for 24/7, to the patients from far-flung areas across Kashmir.

Furthermore, we have started a rehabilitation and training programme for visually impaired pellet injury survivors since May 2017.

25 survivors have been provided with training and visual aid equipments and the demand for the training and long term rehabilitation support is growing.

How can you Help!

- 1- Ask Foreign and Commonwealth Office and it's diplomatic network to specifically focus on Jammu Kashmir as part of its work to defend human rights and promote democracy around the world.
- 2- Monitor and provide in-depth analysis of human rights situation within all the regions of the former principlally State of Jammu Kashmir as part of its country situations and thematic issues analysis which directs that work in the next annual report.
- 3- Impress upon Indian and Pakistan to allow delivery of international Humanitarian aid in all the regions of Jammu Kashmir affected by the gross violation of human rights by the security forces and cross LOC shelling by the armies of both countries.
- 4- Facilitate in organising an International Humanitarian aid conference to establish meaningful response for alleviating the sufferings of the people affected by Jammu and Kashmir conflict.

Kashmir Development Foundation would welcome opportunities for further engagement and cooperation. If you need any additional information please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you,

Sardar Aftab Khan - Executive director
Kashmir Development Foundation (KDF)

Tel: 07837546440

E-mail: kdfajk@gmail.com

Date: 12th December 2017



[Kashmir Development Foundation](#)

Kashmir Development Foundation (KDF) is a civil society organisation working for community development and empowering the voices of the underrepresented people and communities to help create the conditions for an open, peaceful, inclusive and prosperous society by supporting communities to engage in collective action for transformative change. KDF and HELP Foundation working together to deliver humanitarian aid and rehabilitation projects in Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir.

Vision - Our vision is an open, peaceful and prosperous society

Mission - Kashmir Development Foundation exists to empower the voices of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and Kashmiri Diaspora in the UK, Europe and elsewhere by working with the people to prevent or relieve poverty, take climate action, engage in peacebuilding and conflict transformation initiatives at grass root level, enhance quality of education and social mobility, advance gender equality and reduce inequality by supporting community development and partnerships to improve peoples' quality of life, good health and well-being, skills and socioeconomic status; and delivers training, research, engagement and enterprise solutions for all sector.

Kashmir Development Foundation is a registered charity in the United Kingdom and registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales Charity No.1143891 and Company No 05664890.

KDF is a company set up under section 42 of the Companies Ordinance, 1984 and registered with the Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan Registration No. 058485 and in Azad Jammu Kashmir registered under Societies Registration Act 1860/21. KDF has been certified by [Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy \(PCP\)](#) Certification No PCP/2016/0444 for compliance with the desired applicable requirements and meets certification standards in the areas of internal governance, financial management and programme delivery.

For further information visit www.kdf.ngo and follow us on www.facebook.com/kdfuk or www.twitter.com/kdfajk

HELP FOUNDATION

HELP Foundation J&K is a Civil Society Organization [CSO] (registered as a Society under the Societies Registration Act VI of 1998 (1941 A.D) on 13th November 1997 vide registration No. 2905-S having its Registered Office at 16-Gogji Bagh, Srinagar, J&K) presided over by Ms. Nighat Shafi, with the objective of providing helping hand to the people affected by violence in the strife-torn valley. The focus has been on providing quality education, empowerment and mental health counselling to women and children, who have been the worst victims of turmoil.

HELP Foundation provides relief and rehabilitation to various sections of the society who are severely challenged by physical disability and/or economic deprivation. Since devastating earthquake of 2005, HELP foundation is actively working in the areas of emergency relief and post disaster rehabilitation. HELP always strive to be at the forefront in civil society response to deal humanitarian crises such as economic blockade to Kashmir, floods, earthquake, and political unrests of 2008, 2010 and 2016. We support people in crises situations with the support of lifesaving articles, food, shelter and medical aid. In recent uprising of 2016, HELP has been instrumental in facilitating humanitarian action to assist medical service providers by supporting them financially and morally. A significant number of victims were treated at super speciality hospitals across India, especially those who got hit by lethal pellets in their eyes.

HELP is working with the youth and people dependent on informal economy. We develop behavioural skills among masses through a specially designed Training workshop. Besides working on environmental issues, advocacy for rights of women, child rights and their protection, free legal aid to widows, half widows and other vulnerable sects of society. To know more about HELP Foundation please log on to <http://www.helpfoundation.co>.



KASHMIR

DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

www.kdf.ngo /kdfuk @kdfajk

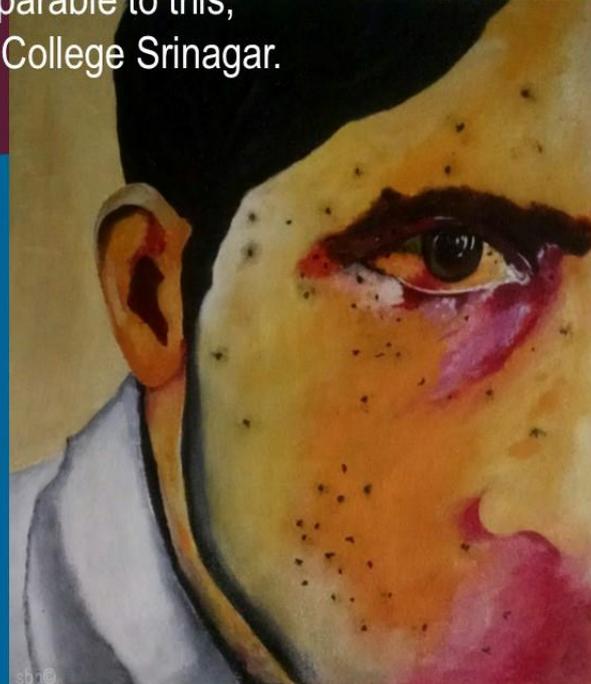
“This epidemic of dead or dying eyes is the largest in the world caused by un-natural causes. Nowhere in history will one find anything comparable to this,” a professor at Government Medical College Srinagar.



Help us!

In rebuilding lives of the people with enforced blindness in Kashmir

We have over 535 people blinded in at least one eye. “We have over 300 school going children facing blindness who will perhaps never go back to school again,” (Ophthalmologist at SMHS Hospital, Srinagar’s, 2016).



Please donate generously !

Online at:

<http://bit.ly/Donate4Pelletvictims>

Or deposit in the

Kashmir Development Foundation

Barclays Bank Account.

Sort Code: 20-72-67 A/C: 70344923

Charity Reg. No. 1143891



In 4 months since July 8th 2016,

- 1178 persons injured by pellet gun shots fired by security forces in their eyes,
- 22% are less than 17 year-old.
- 76% are less than 40 years-old.
- At least 10 % survivors will never be able to see with the injured eyes . (15th Mar 2017)

