

Anticipated Outcomes of OIC meeting in Pakistan

written by Ezba Walayat | March 19, 2022



Overview:

During the past time, Pakistan remarkably has hosted a number of major Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) events. Last year in December 2021, Pakistan held an extraordinary 17th session of OIC exclusively on Afghanistan. This year, Pakistan will again host OIC's 48th session of Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) on 22-23 March, in Islamabad and that is a matter of great honor. For the particular session, Pakistani officials have confirmed the participation of the 48 Muslim countries' foreign ministers until now. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi has been invited for the event as a "guest of honor". Apart from that, a high-level Russian delegation would also take part in it. The meeting will be coinciding with the celebrations of Pakistan's 75th Independence anniversary and the ministers will attend the 23rd March Pakistan Day parade.

Theme of the Meeting:

The session will be conducted under the theme of "Building partnerships for Unity, Justice and Development". The General Secretariat will address the implementation of activities, projects and resolutions adopted on different issues in the Islamic world including Kashmir and Palestine. In addition, issues of Islamophobia, terrorism as well as developments in Afghanistan and its humanitarian consequences for the Afghan people will be the important part of meeting's agenda. Cooperation issues with international community, specifically the United States, the Russian federation and the European Union will be discussed while considering the ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis.

Prospects:

As the host country, Pakistan seeks to foster unity among OIC members, advance the cause of justice for Muslims, and accomplish the mutually reinforcing goals of prosperity and development for all OIC members. Right now, the majority conflicts in the world including Yemen, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Palestine and other regions depict that Muslim communities are at high risk, which implies the urgency of OIC's function and position more crucial than ever. Issues such as peace, security, economic development, cultural and scientific collaboration and the role of the OIC will be discussed. Over the last few years, the organization's activities particularly in relation to Kashmir and Palestine have received notable attention. The forthcoming CFM will be a great chance for member states to establish a common ground that will help to build 'partnership' and work as a bridge to address the variety of challenges that Muslim Ummah is facing. In OIC, Pakistan has taken a leadership role for countering Islamophobia which resulted in a good conclusion. On March 15th, United Nations General Assembly approved a resolution that was introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In the imminent meeting, OIC will focus on Islamophobia and associated aspects such as hate speech, discrimination, intolerance and negative stereotyping against Muslims. This time OIC would be a significant platform and a voice for Muslim countries regarding their concerns that are needed to be heard in the international arena.



Kashmir will be the part of extensive agenda, ahead of the 48th session; Pakistan has drafted a resolution seeking adoption with the goal of directing its anti-India rhetoric at Kashmir. Hurriyat Conference members are also invited at the conference that will highlight the humanitarian challenges and will remind the world to look upon the stance of Kashmiris. The last OIC's summit which held in Pakistan, ended with the establishment of the OIC-led Humanitarian Trust Fund for Afghanistan to channel aid, as well as the designation of the OIC Secretary General's Special Envoy to work alongside the UN in the war-torn country. Moreover, the members will review the previous decisions on Afghanistan in this session.

In the view of contemporary challenges, OIC will be a unified voice not only for member countries but for the Muslims around the world. The world is going through difficult times and experiencing a renewed cold war due to Ukraine crisis. Therefore, the upcoming meeting holds importance for Pakistan along with other members in this regard. The OIC meeting will have the opportunity to examine increasing threats and the options available for the Islamic world to deal with the ongoing issues. Also, it will provide an opportunity to build a common attitude in attaining peace and stability at regional and global level.



Pakistan is looking forward for a productive session and has become a center stage of attention. Its efforts as well as contributions are being acknowledged and appreciated by the member countries. In the following event, brotherhood and unity which are also core Islamic values will be portrayed and this will create an image of cooperation and strong bonding of Muslim states worldwide.

Role of Digital Media in Projecting Kashmir Issue

written by Zeshan Bajwa | March 19, 2022



We are living in the digital era where media is playing a prominent role in our daily lives from individual to statecraft. Media has its own atmosphere which impacts on human minds. So, in that realm of the digital world, we cannot ignore the presence of digital media and its influence in politics.

Digital media is the main source of information from common to upper classes, when states and regimes controlling the flow of information. According to data provided by "Our World", it is estimated that one in three people uses social media worldwide, more than 2.3 billion people out of seven billion use the social media to access information. The use of social media for manipulation is commonly increasing in different parts of the world which is quite evident. Many political and non-state actors use social media to proliferate their ideologies in general population. Their activities range from disinformation campaigns to rumors over transit options and hate speech around different groups. Social media is leading to overloaded distrust information, critical gaps as well as confusion over news and information.



In the context of conflicted areas, social activists, international organizations, independent news agencies use social media as a weapon to report human rights violation. State organized violence and mass killing highlights the stories of oppressed ones. In the region of Kashmir which is disputed territory between India and Pakistan. The social media have played an effective role during recent mass mobilization for “right to self-determination”. Indian administration imposed some serious censorship over digital and main stream media to cover up the human rights violations in the valley. Social media activism is posing a major challenge to the Indian state in Kashmir; most people are tending towards use of soft-power to empower their cause of right to self-determination.

Ground realities from conflicted area portrayed through digital media has helped international organizations, NGO’s and government institutions to pressurize the Indian occupation forces to stop violence. Frequent internet bans in Kashmir territory have been widely criticized by international organizations like UNO and Amnesty International. Many political analysts across the world as an arbitrary act to sabotage dissent and to serve as a form of ‘collective punishment’ for Kashmiri people in the region.



After the killing of Burhan Wani, a young social media activist with a fundamental ideological approach towards Kashmir movement, by Indian Armed forces inspired a whole generation of young people to raise their voices against Indian government and their atrocities in the region. This particular event and Burhan has become a symbol of both the youthful defiance on streets and the oppression of the Indian security forces by using Camera and Gun at the same time.

On August 5, 2019, India abrogated Article 370 and 35 A, which further more destabilized the valley of Kashmir. When the Indian government scrapped the region's semi-autonomous status, and declared Kashmir as part of Indian union territory against all international and bilateral agreement with Pakistan, this created the political instability in the region and people started chanting on the streets against the unlawful act by the Indian Administration. In response to that, Indian authorities imposed a sweeping communication and internet shutdown in the region. The internet shut down continued for months, the longest internet suspension that took place in a democracy. According to an international organization "Access Now", social media giants like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube joined hands with Indian government to remove the content related to Kashmir, which is projecting the freedom struggle of Kashmiri people. Kashmiri voices in the digital spaces through the frequent suspension of the accounts of artists, academics, and journalists based in and outside the disputed region, a move termed by experts as "inacceptable in free world". Geeta Seshu, co-founder of Free Speech Collective group stated that, "Successive governments have censored and silenced voices of dissent in Kashmir for decades now but when social media companies do so too, it becomes all the more reprehensible."



Kashmiri activists and artists came with new ideas to cope up with this situation and initiated campaigns using the instrument of Music, Culture and Poetry to support Kashmiris against the oppression of India. On September 20th 2019, Kashmiri artists, highlighted the theme of “Resist to Exist” with the collaboration from British-Kashmiri artist Sumaya Teli and Kashmiri-American artist, Nouf Bazaz. Through the collaboration of artists, the event shared stories of the Kashmiri struggle against Indian occupation and militarization and for the right to Kashmiri self-determination. It went viral in different parts of the world, and help youth to understand the Kashmir situation and Indian mistreatment of Kashmiri people. In the recent six to seven years, we have seen, how digital media revolutionized the Kashmir Conflict and created the environment where young researchers and activists can access the information to understand the conflict and to advocate the worth of freedom for the next generations.