

## The Role of Civil Society in Conflict Prevention in Jammu and Kashmir

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### Abstract

*Civil Society raises always their voices against repression and injustices. It can play a vital role for resolving the Kashmir conflict. Civil society in Kashmir is not emerging as strong due to turmoil situations in Kashmir. It is the Civil Society, which has the power to speak truth and make the Government accountable and transparent regarding abuses and violations. Civil society is one of the main players in the conflict resolution process. It can play a greater role in prevention of violence not only in Kashmir, but also across the globe. Civil society can highlight the demands of the people, issues of gross violation of human rights. It can pressurize the government to take better steps for the people. It can participate in over all humanitarian activities. It is only the civil society, which has the power and potential to speak truth and make the Government accountable and transparent regarding the abuses and violations. The civil society actors have no political agendas and aims but their main objectives are to work for the betterment of entire society. It is only civil society, which can knock the doors of law to make justice a possibility. Therefore, it would be not wrong to quote that civil society is really working for the betterment of entire humanity. Peace is only possible when there is justice and equality. Once the culprits are punished and brought to book, the people can repose their trust in the system and definitely, the wrong doers could restrain themselves from abuses and violations. The civil society could have established pressure group and this way the State Government could be transparent and responsive, accordingly the Government of India and Government of Pakistan as well as leaders of Kashmir will come under pressure and will be forced to get the problem solved. The civil society actors can approach both Governments India-Pakistan and Kashmiri separatist leaders to go for the permanent solution of Kashmir imbroglio. From the very beginning, it was the aim of civil society to work for the public good. The civil society is able to bring the changes in the attitudes and mindsets of the conflicted parties by presenting viable, productive and sustainable policies. The civil society throughout world got a common agendas and common policies i.e. human welfare, peace, prosperity and dignity. Thousands of people in Kashmir are in need of relief and rehabilitation. Leaders have failed to bring smiles on the faces of affected persons; it is again the voluntary sector of civil society, which can do it. It is able to mobilize the local resources; the trust, which the civil society is enjoying of people, can be utilized for this task. Civil society actors can enjoy an entry everywhere as they are impartial having no specific association with any agenda. The actors of civil society have to think and sit together for having common platform in order to bring peace and prosperity in Kashmir valley. Civil society organizations have an important advantage when it comes in conflict prevention. Because they are independent, flexible and close to the people, they are in an ideal position to strengthen social networks, build confidence between different population groups and sound alarm when the first signs of violence appear.*

**Keywords:** Civil society, conflict, Jammu and Kashmir

### Introduction

Civil Society raises always their voices against repression and injustices. It can play a vital role for resolving the Kashmir conflict. Civil society in Kashmir is not emerging as strong due to turmoil situations in Kashmir. It is the Civil Society, which has the power to speak truth and make the Government accountable and transparent regarding abuses and violations. The civil society actors have no political agenda. Civil society could have established its pressure groups, which can make State and Central Government accountable and transparent. Kashmiris have always been under submission. History has it that they have been loyal to their leaders. In many regimes, Kashmiris have suffered at the hands of their masters. Now today in democratic and scientific age it is very unfortunate that Kashmiris are not being treated like human beings. Much has changed for the world outside, but the fate of a common Kashmiri remains same. They are not being heard, they cry for justice. Therefore, a peace-building process in Kashmir region demands vibrant civil society, which could play a vital role. Civil society can create new avenues and ways to help the people of Kashmir. Civil society is really a good platform where the voice of oppressed people is being raised, they can put a pressure over the government to listen the genuine demands of people and prevent violations.

In a democratic country like India, civil society can play a crucial role in order to help and serve the marginalized and downtrodden sections of society. Kashmir needs a vibrant civil society, in order to meet people, listen their problems, and try to highlight those problems. Civil society can be counted as the protector and guardian of the rights of oppressed people.

### ***Definition of Civil Society***

In the framework of this paper, I cannot deal with all the nuances related to the conceptualization and definition of key terms. Because there are many different ways of looking at civil society. It is generally agreed that civil society refers to a voluntary and non-profit set of institutions, organizations, and behaviours situated between the state, the market, and the family. Some concepts that are used in this connection are clearly political and incorporate notions of dissent and struggle, while others are more normative and idealistic, and generally emphasize the 'good side' of civil society. Again, others conceive civil society as a process where groupings or individual actors organize with the aim to protect or extend their interests, ideologies, and identities. Civil society include, civil society organizations (CSO), community based organizations (CBO), non-governmental organizations (NGO), informal and non-institutionalized associations or communities.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Oppressed People***

It is an admitted fact that Kashmir is now a conflict zone, for the last sixty years the problem of Kashmir is unsolved between two countries India and Pakistan as well as between Kashmiris. Both the countries admit this dispute and promise to get it solved but on the ground, there seems to be no progress. India has treated the Kashmir an internal problem and they have taken it as law and order problem always. They never realized the magnitude of the matter. The role of Delhi has always remained negative, they tried to divide the Kashmiris and rule. Unfortunately, Kashmiris were always misled and they got divided for small personal ends by ignoring the national interests. India is always talking of democracy and tried to present before world that in Jammu And Kashmir State the people are electing their representatives. All the Kashmiris know how India has managed the elections in Kashmir. When Delhi is interested to have Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as Prime Minister or Chief Minister they do so and when they wanted to install Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad or Sadiq Sahib they did. In the year 1987 Delhi decided to have Farooq Abdullah as Chief Minister, they extended the support of Congress for coalition and rigged the election defeating MUF candidates who were having the mass support of people and result is before us. Kashmiri people especially youth lost their faith in Indian democracy and they disbelieve Indian leadership.

It was always with Indian leadership that they tried to demoralize the local leadership in Kashmir and they never respected the aspirations and sentiments of people, the Kashmiris were made politically poor vis-à-vis on economic front the cogent and solid steps have been initiated by Indian leadership. India used and utilized the water resources, forest resources and other potential resources of Kashmir for their own ends but never tried to give in return the dividends to the Kashmiris people, this way the people of state lost the trust and confidence, they fed alienation with the deeds of political leadership and defective system. Over the last twenty years, Kashmir has suffered the worst. With a tremendous loss of life and property where does Kashmir stand? Many dialogues and roundtables conferences were organized but what is the outcome? Nil, the common Kashmiri is not feeling any relaxation, he is feeling as if he is in cave or in a prison, he is not in a position to think and regain his shattered economy. To resolve a conflict there should be firm will and ways are open then "where there is will there is a way" to resolve Kashmir problem it needs political intervention and some bold political decisions are to be taken by the Indian political leaders. The Indian leaders have some problem in order to have dialogue with Kashmiri leadership who represent the sentiments of Kashmiris.

Simultaneously the Kashmiri leadership have certain problems for having open dialogue with India, the Pakistan India dialogue is long term process and it has consumed years together and will take more years to yield results. It is reality that common Kashmiri are suffering. The future of youth is at stake, he is uncertain, for how long the instability will exist. To bring peace and have conflict transformation into prosperity everyone is concerned but no one is serious, everyone has a role to play but no one is playing it with zeal and dedication. In such circumstances, the civil society has a role to play in Kashmir. During a recent visit to Kashmir, an International Centre for Peace Initiatives team observed signs of developmental work undertaken in the last few years and an upswing in the local economy, despite a stagnant tourism industry. Real state prices in Srinagar, for instance, have increased dramatically, whereas they are depressed in cities like Bangalore and Mumbai. These changes in urban life are occurring alongside a deteriorating rural economy and the flight of capital outside Kashmir.<sup>3</sup>

Most businesspersons have migrated to other parts of India, and there is an absence of capital infusion into villages. As a result, there is rampant unemployment, which is affected by the security environment that discourages private investment. The absence of a vibrant civil society, the bedrock of any state system, owing to the many years of conflict is apparent from the lack of social institutions and the failure of the political leadership to harness the energy of the people in a constructive direction. There is no denying fact that civil society has a crucial role to play in Kashmir conflict or any other conflict because, they have no vested interests. The role of civil society in conflict resolution is even meaningful in all democracies be it India or any other democracy of the world. The compelling force behind the conflict in Kashmir comes from the incompatible ideologies driving Indian and Pakistani nationalism and their incompatibility with the separatist's aspirations of some people in Jammu and Kashmir. After nearly twelve years of deadly conflict, most protagonists in the conflict wish an end to the violence, as also the people of Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Voices for Justice***

The diplomats do not usually get involved until things go wrong. NGOs are often there long before, when there is still plenty of time to put things right. Civil society organizations have an important advantage when it comes in conflict prevention. Because they are independent, flexible and close to the people, they are in an ideal position to strengthen social networks, build confidence between different population groups and sound alarm when the first signs of violence appear. Post-conflict situations call for physical reconstruction. However, a well-developed civil society, along with an independent media and judiciary, are equally essential for sustainable growth and stability. The importance efforts to rebuild civil society by the establishment of the rule of law, stimulation of political dialogue and public participation must not be under-estimated, as they provide both formal and informal institutions for reconstruction in post conflict situations. Therefore, efforts to strengthen civil society is a necessity that can be facilitated by NGOs, both local and otherwise, in a number of ways – by assisting local communities and individuals in the design of programmes, providing capacity building services, access to financing, and establishment of legal entities like cooperatives. There are a handful of youth groups, blood banks, and orphanages, but no development NGOs or trade associations.

NGOs can work at different levels in Kashmir and deal with the short and long-term consequences of violence by enabling locals to remove the structural, behavioral and attitudinal conditions leading to violence. Focusing on reconciliation and healing is another area where NGOs could play a role to help people who have suffered and to forgive those who have perpetrated harm on them, and to begin contemplating the next steps beyond civil war and insurgency. One such attempt to set up a NGO in Kashmir is by Development Studies Centre at the University of Birmingham, UK for an integrated research, training and dissemination programme to revive civil society organization in Jammu and Kashmir for conflict resolution, peace-building and development. They propose to work with other NGOs as partners towards restoring the cohesion of civil society through a process of facilitating and developing interaction among Kashmiris in the trading, commercial, cultural and religious communities across both sides of the Line of Control.<sup>5</sup>

Efforts at reconciliation by NGOs could entail; (a) facilitating the creation of a porous border for an intra-Kashmir dialogue, (b) rehabilitation of the Kashmiri pandits who had fled the valley due to various reasons, (c) action against human rights violations, (d) encourage visits by prominent political leaders, (e) creation of a memorial for people who have disappeared and help assuage the feelings of the people, (f) encouraging religious, social, civic and youth leaders to promote communal harmony, (g) reintegrating former militants in the society, and (h) encouraging contact between Kashmiri people and those from other parts of India as a confidence building measure. While reconciliation measures help in the short-term, it is necessary to prepare the ground for long-term efforts.<sup>6</sup>

NGOs need to examine possible measures for reconstruction, which are as follows; (a) improvement in the daily living conditions; (b) promotion of tourism by dispelling the perception of an insecure environment; (c) training of youth for employment and self-employment; (d) empowering women in Kashmir and rebuilding the lines of those affected by violence; (e) rehabilitation of orphans and widows without discrimination; (f) improvement of education in terms of course content and employment opportunities reforming education keeping in mind the damage caused to the minds of children due to years of unending violence; (g) promotion of horticulture, food processing, agro-processing industries and creating cold-storage facilities by encouraging public and private investment; (h) harnessing the hydro-electric potential of the state; (i) an environmental action plan-centered on curbing timber-forestation, and urban water management going beyond just the cleaning the Dal lake.<sup>7</sup>

There is no single path to peace and magic solution to any of the challenges facing Kashmir; hence, it is necessary to acknowledge the contributions NGOs can make to post-conflict peace-building. There are thousands of examples where civil society has shown greater concern for oppressed and marginalized sections of society but I want to mention some recent cases of protest by civil society for the people of Kashmir. Civil Society protested on Kashmir killings on 10 July 2010 in New Delhi at Jantar Mantar. Representatives from various civil society groups expressed their solidarity for the people of Kashmir. The two-hour Dharna was organized by a non-governmental organization ANHAD. Addressing sit in, the speakers called for immediate action to prevent further loss of life and property, putting an immediate end to the violence perpetrated by the security forces, appointing an independent and impartial time bound commission of enquiry to look into the killing of peaceful civilians and human rights violations initiating an inquiry into instances of attacks on ambulances services, ensuring security of the journalists both of local and national media, ensuring freedom of expression and press and starting a political dialogue immediately with various stake-holders in the state.

The speakers observed; “It is matter of great concern and anguish that no sensitive measures have been taken by the Central Government in response to the ongoing deaths, injuries and killings in cold-blood of civilians in Jammu and Kashmir, including young girls and boys, most of them innocent, peaceful protestors, or even just bystanders”.<sup>8</sup> “The reality is that democracy is under severe strain and is almost absent in many parts in this state, despite an elected government backed by the centre holding the reigns of power at Srinagar”,<sup>9</sup> the speakers said. “*ANHAD*” and many other concerned civil society groups in India want the government in the state and centre to come out clean urgently and immediately and explain if this is indeed a democratic and constitutional method of handling a manifold and multiplying crisis in a highly sensitive region”, the speakers said. The speakers said the government is only pushing for an escalation in the number of deployment of security forces. “This clearly indicates the callous attitude of the governments in Delhi and Srinagar. Such acts of brutality are in complete violation of the law of the land and constitutional rights of the people that have resulted in mass outrage and alienation of large sections of the civilian population in Kashmir,” the speakers said. They said that unarmed, non-violent citizens are being treated with such blatant and indiscriminate use of military force. “Despite repeated assurances by the Central and State Governments of zero-tolerance towards human rights violations, the fact remains that little has been done to punish those responsible for such heinous and gross violations. The speakers said, “This organized insensitivity and vacillation to act firmly against such elements is bound to put a question mark on the credibility of the state and its track record in terms of human and democratic rights of the people, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Mere rhetoric and institution of official enquiries is not enough to restore the shattered and shaken confidence of the people. It is imperative that the Central and State authorities to take firm and visible action against those responsible for unleashing this brutish violence on innocent people. Any delay will only compound the alienation and anger of the people resulting in irrefutable damage to peace process in the valley and elsewhere in the state”, the speakers said.

The speakers at Dharna included, Shabnam Hashmi (ANHAD), Harsh Kapoor (South Asia Citizens Web), Navaid Hamid (Member, NIC), Prof. Kamal Mitra Chenoy (JNU), Prof. Anuradha Chenoy (JNU), Tanveer Hussain Khan (ANHAD), Indu Prakash (IGSSS), Madhu Chandra (North Eastern Helpline), Divya (YWCA), Sanjay Kumar (AAA), Amitabh Pandey (Free Lancer), Ravi Himadri (the other Media), Prof. Rizwan Kaiser (Jamia Millia Islamia), Swami Agnivesh, Mansi Sharma (ANHAD), Seema Duhan (ANHAD), besides it different media, social activists, journalists, peace activists, human rights activists, lawyers, editors, historians, columnists, and writers joined this Dharna. This is not a first time that Dharna was organized at Jantar Mantar, by the Civil Society. But civil society associations always organized dharnas at different place of India and across the globe against the gross violations of human rights in Kashmir. Prominent members of India’s civil society were always against violence, injustice, and killings. They have laid thrust upon that India should have a dialogue with Kashmiri leadership and Pakistani leadership to settle the Kashmir dispute. Members of India’s civil society in a joint statement expressed concern over the fast deteriorating situation in the occupied territory, which had recently witnessed the senseless killing of over one hundred innocent youth by Indian troops. They said that the army had now been directly deployed in many areas of the territory in a shameful attempt to cover up the utter political failure of the Governments of India and its authorities in occupied Kashmir. They urged India to send the army back to the barracks and out of all inhabited areas in the territory, release all illegally detained political leaders, and activists repeal the draconian laws such as, AFPSA, and Public Safety Act. In addition, urgently start meaningful and result oriented talks with Pakistan and Kashmiris for the settlement of the Kashmir dispute.

The signatories to the statement include, Dr. J.K. Jain, Chairman of the Jain TV, Syed Shahabuddin, President, All India Majlis-e-Mushawarat, Prem Shankar Jha, Columnist, Prof. Ram Puniyani, All India Secular Forum, N.D. Pancholi, People's Union of Civil Liberties, Manisha Sethi, Jamia Teacher's Solidarity Association, Yugal Kishor Saran Shastri, Ayodhya, Prof. Nirmalanshu Mukherji, Delhi University, Dr. Shamsul Islam, DU, Neelima Sharma, Theatre Person, Zafar Mahmood, President Interfaith Coalition, Kamal Faruqui, Ex-Chairman, Minorities Commission Delhi, Navaid Hamid, Member National Integration Council, Dr. M.H. Jawahirullah, President, Tamilnadu Muslim Munetra Kazhagam, Lateef Mohammad Khan, Civil Liberties Monitoring Committee and Dr. Zafrul Islam Khan, Editor, The Milli Gazette.<sup>10</sup>

On 8 August 2010, at Jantar Mantar S.A.R. Geelani – lecturer of Delhi University addressing the gathering said civil society must join in the protests over the killings in Kashmir over the past two months. He said, “Kashmiris living outside the state share the pain of those in the valley. They share their grief when innocent persons are killed, they share their pain when tear gas shells are lobbed at them and feel their suffocation when they are bound in curfew”.<sup>11</sup> He reiterated civil society should not be silent on Kashmir killings; they should come out and peacefully do protest. If they are not feeling the grief of innocent Kashmiris and they are silent, this silence will be considered criminal silence. Protest is our democratic right. Sanjay Kak a filmmaker said, “The Government has to stop the militarization in Kashmir. There can be no democracy if it is attained at gunpoint. Indian army has to be withdrawn because it is not meant to fight India's own people”. Later it was said by Kalpana Mehta of the ‘Women Against Sexual Violence and State Repression’ a network that runs in 13 states, has expressed his viewpoints that the behavior of the Central Bureau of Investigation in the Shopian rape case has been shameful. It can be said, that civil society can play a crucial role in building peace in Kashmir. It can be also a check over violence, injustices, brutalities, killings and above all over the gross violations of human rights.<sup>12</sup>

It is also necessary to take into account some recent examples from Kashmir. In a memorandum submitted to the all party delegation, the members of the Kashmir Centre for Social and Development Studies (KCSDS), including financial analyst Abdul Majeed Zargar, pediatrician Dr. Altaf Hussain, social activist Anwar Ashai, former secretary Board of School Education Bashir Ahmad Dar, academicians, Hameeda Nayeem and Qurat-ul –Ain, former chief conservator forests Noor-ul-Hassan, and writers Dr. Javed Iqbal, Arjimand Hussain Talib, and Z.G. Muhammad have suggested a two pronged strategy for India to realize its potential as a world leader by sorting out the Kashmir problem, which according to it hampered New Delhi, from the role it aspired to play in geopolitics. They all said that we the members of Jammu and Kashmir civil society wish to welcome this August delegation here in this hour of immense grief and suffering to the people of this state. “We are of the firm opinion that you respected members of Indian Parliament, who believe in the democracy and the rule of law, will understand and help in addressing the political aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with internationally recognized democratic principles and the rule of law. We also believe that you fully appreciate the fact that no credible democratic system can exist, nor a people could be expected to live in peace, under tight and humiliating military control, extra-democratic maneuvering and undemocratic political and administrative systems,”<sup>13</sup> the memorandum says.

The events of the past six decades in general and those of the past three months in particular are testimony to the fact that the voice of the people of Jammu and Kashmir cannot be muzzled despite the state's repressive measures, which are totally untenable in this modern age.” Today a semblance of calm has been established in Jammu and Kashmir only after enforcing a strict curfew, deploying tens of thousands of armed forces, large-scale detentions, complete media blackout, ban on sms services, and so on. The free hand given to armed to kill and maim civilians, while enjoying complete immunity, is unacceptable to the people of Jammu and Kashmir State. People's spiritual, physical, economic and social spaces have been greatly infringed because of massive military presence in the state. No economic packages and cosmetic administrative measures can be a substitute for demilitarization and a life based on political justice and rule of law. We sincerely believe India has a key economic and political role to play in the emerging world order. However, its intense pre-occupation with Jammu and Kashmir's is hurting its image of humane, forward-looking and accommodative democracy. This long pending political issue is also hindering India's positive engagement with its neighbors, resulting in unfavorable political, strategic and economic situations for it. Towards sustainable peace in Jammu and Kashmir, ending the six decades political uncertainty here, and India's transition as a more confident economic and political superpower, we believe the government of India needs to embark on a two-pronged strategy:

(1) Immediate measures for de-escalation and confidence building. (2) Long term steps towards a result oriented engagement with Islamabad and Srinagar to address Jammu and Kashmir.

For immediate de-escalation and confidence building in Jammu and Kashmir, we call upon your good offices to help to initiative; (a) release of all political prisoners, including children and youth arrested during past three months. (b) removal/ withdrawal of bunkers and other security establishments from all civilian areas. (c) fixing responsibility for civilian killings, fake encounters, including those carried out at the Line of Control (LoC) by army officers for promotions and cash prizes (d) initiation of legal action against those members of armed forces responsible for killing of innocent children, students, youth and other civilians (e) withdrawal of draconian laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Disturbed Areas Act (DAA) and Public Safety Act (PSA) etc. (f) return of all those people who have migrated from the state in the wake of 1990 situation (g) immediate cessation of civilian killings and other human right violations.

(2) Long term steps towards a result- oriented trilateral engagement with Islamabad and Srinagar to address Jammu and Kashmir dispute. (a) Phased, time bound and verifiable demilitarization and engagement with main stakeholders (b) facilitating reopening of physical road connections between Jammu and Kashmir and its neighboring regions for trade/ commerce as existed prior 1947 (c) a meaningful dialogue with Srinagar for the final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir.

### **Conclusion**

Civil society is one of the main players in the conflict resolution process. It can play a greater role in prevention of violence not only in Kashmir, but also across the globe. Civil society can highlight the demands of the people, issues of gross violation of human rights. It can pressurize the government to take better steps for the people. It can participate in over all humanitarian activities. It is only the civil society, which has the power and potential to speak truth and make the Government accountable and transparent regarding the abuses and violations. The civil society actors have no political agendas and aims but their main objectives are to work for the betterment of entire society. It is only civil society, which can knock the doors of law to make justice a possibility. Therefore, it would be not wrong to quote that civil society is really working for the betterment of entire humanity. Peace is only possible when there is justice and equality. Once the culprits are punished and brought to book, the people can repose their trust in the system and definitely the wrong doers could restrain themselves from abuses and violations. The civil society could have established pressure group and this way the State Government could be transparent and responsive, accordingly the Government of India and Government of Pakistan as well as leaders of Kashmir will come under pressure and will be forced to get the problem solved.

The civil society actors can approach both Governments India-Pakistan and Kashmiri separatist leaders to go for the permanent solution of Kashmir imbroglio. From the very beginning, it was the aim of civil society to work for the public good. The civil society is able to bring the changes in the attitudes and mindsets of the conflicted parties by presenting viable, productive and sustainable policies. The civil society through out world got a common agendas and common policies i.e. human welfare, peace, prosperity and dignity. Thousands of people in Kashmir are in need of relief and rehabilitation. Leaders have failed to bring smiles on the faces of affected persons; it is again the voluntary sector of civil society, which can do it. It is able to mobilize the local resources; the trust, which the civil society is enjoying of people, can be utilized for this task. Civil society actors can enjoy an entry everywhere as they are impartial having no specific association with any agenda. The actors of civil society have to think and sit together for having common platform in order to bring peace and prosperity in Kashmir valley.

Many NGOs are unwilling to go into a society that is deeply mixed in violence and where the last remnants of civil society have long disappeared. This is an uphill task for any NGO that begins to think about working in Kashmir. This might be one of the reasons for the lack of many NGOs in Kashmir, but it cannot be the only one. On the national and international level, there is no dearth of NGOs working in different fields. In view of the improving good governance position in Kashmir, the socio-political situation is conducive for more NGOs to enter Kashmir society. It is high time some of the more established NGOs come forward with plans and programs to work in Kashmir, giving special priority to the areas and objectives outlined above. However, Kashmir has a unique culture, altogether different customs, traditions, and a distinct faith. It is therefore recommended that national and international NGOs tie up with local NGOs to work more effectively for the welfare of the people of Kashmir.

While local NGOs might not be able to provide infrastructure support, they can definitely provide invaluable guidance and deeper understanding of the local needs. At the same time, the local NGOs would benefit from the broader learning experience they could gain by working with national and international NGOs. In recent years, national and international NGOs have started working towards peace and reconciliation. However, they also need to give top priority to working towards relief and rehabilitation of the traumatized victims of the last 20 years of military violence. Once a culture of peace and normal life prevails in Kashmiri society, the work of NGOs can be effective. Financial transparency and working independently of political agenda is essential. Most importantly, the people of Kashmir have to take the lead in the revival of civil society by working towards the larger good of society, and not depend on outsiders to come and help them. Thus, local initiative, commitment and resolve combined with the organizational, institutional guidance of national and international organizations is the way ahead for what is currently a dismal situation as far as NGOs, and civil society in Kashmir is concerned.

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