



Journal of Government and Political Issues

1-9

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DOI: 10.53341/jgpi.v3i1.62

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# Human Rights Crisis in Jammu and Kashmir: A Comprehensive Analysis of Systematic Abuses and Urgent Call for Action

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## Abstract

This manuscript presents a critical analysis of human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, aiming to shed light on the gravity of the ongoing crisis. The research focuses on the systematic nature of abuses, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, sexual violence, and restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. Employing a descriptive and analytical approach, the study examines the impact of these violations on civilians' lives in the conflict-ridden region, utilizing secondary data sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex human rights situation. The findings reveal alarming statistics, with over 70,000 killings, 8,000 enforced disappearances, and 10,000 cases of torture documented since the insurgency began. Draconian laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and the Public Safety Act (PSA) have granted security forces immunity, leading to arbitrary detentions and the use of force against civilians. Socio-economic consequences are substantial, with child labor, bonded labor, and forced marriages adding to the challenges. Minority communities, particularly the Muslim community, have faced discriminatory treatment, further exacerbating the crisis. The study emphasizes the urgency of addressing the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir, calling for concrete actions from the government and the international community. By highlighting the widespread violations and their impact on various aspects of life, this research urges collective efforts to safeguard the rights and well-being of the people in the region. It contributes to the growing body of knowledge on human rights in Jammu and Kashmir, advocating for justice, peace, and respect for human rights.

## Keywords

jammu and kashmir; human rights crisis; covid-19; india

## Introduction

Human rights are universal and apply to every individual regardless of their race, color, or sex. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 emphasized this principle, affirming that the dignity and rights of every human being begin at conception ([Kunz, 1949](#)). However, despite this declaration, human rights violations are still widespread in several parts of the world ([Lone, 2018](#)). Jammu and Kashmir, a disputed region between India and Pakistan, has been a hotbed of political tensions and human rights violations for decades ([Dar, 2016](#); [Lone, 2018](#)). Despite various attempts to address the issue, the situation in the region remains grim, with reports of human rights abuses still emerging. In light of this, the article by [Mohan \(2012\)](#), critically analyses the state of democracy and human rights in Jammu and Kashmir ([Khan, Khan, & Abbas, 2021](#); [Mohan, 2012](#)).

Jammu and Kashmir, an Indian-administrated region, is one such area where human rights violations have been a persistent issue. All kinds of abuses, including mass killings, kidnappings, torture, rape, and sexual assault, have been alleged ([S. A. Bhat, 2019](#)). Military personnel from the Indian Army, other militant groups, Central Reserve Police, and Border Security Force have been accused of grave human rights violations against civilians in the region. The lack of individual dignity and respect has also eroded

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democracy on this part of the continent ([The Forum for Human Rights in Jammu and Kashmir, 2020](#)).

**Table 1.** Human Rights Development Timeline in Jammu and Kashmir

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>2019</b>	
July 5	Suspended in Shopian (counter-insurgency gunfight)
July 10	Suspended in Anantnag, Pulwama, Kulgam, and Shopian (Burhan Wani death anniversary)
July 27	Shopian (CASO)
August 4	Mobile, landline, and internet suspended across state
September 9	Some landlines restored
<b>2020</b>	
January 15	Broadband and mobile services restored for 1 week
January 25	PS GOJK order that mobile and internet services be restricted to 2G and only white-listed social media sites allowed
Same day	Internet snapped
January 27	Internet restored
January 31	PS GOJK order of 25th January extended for 1 week
February 7	Extended again for 1 week
February 12	Mobile, internet services suspended
February 15	PS GOJK order of 25th January extended for 10 days (February 24)
February 24	Extended again till March 4
March 4	Extended again till March 26
March 24	COVID lockdown. 2G restrictions continued.
March 26	PS GOJK order of 25th January extended again, till April 3
April 3	Extended again till April 15
April 15	Extended till April 28
April 28	Extended till May 11
May 11	Continued till May 27
May 27	Continued till June 17
June 17	Continued to July 17
July 8	Continued to July 29
<b>Mobile+/internet shutdowns in previous 5 years</b>	
2014-15	5 shutdowns
2015-16	5 shutdowns
2016-17	10 shutdowns
2017-18	32 shutdowns
2018-19	65 shutdowns

Source: [The Forum for Human Rights in Jammu and Kashmir \(2020\)](#)

According to a study by [I. A. Bhat \(2017\)](#), the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has been a matter of concern for decades. The authors argue that the conflict in the region has created a state of insecurity, which has led to numerous human rights violations. Despite various efforts by the government and other

organizations, the situation remains grim, with reports of human rights abuses still emerging ([Reshii, 2015](#)). Large numbers of military personnel are stationed in the region, not only to defend the region and its people but also to subdue unwarranted arrest, torture, killing, and rape by security forces ([Haq, 2018](#); [Shayiq, 2013](#)). Thousands of people have died as a result of custodial death, leaving their loved ones without access to the deceased's body. The violence in Jammu and Kashmir has caused an incomprehensible number of victims, and many families have been devastated by the loss of loved ones ([Sadiq, 2018](#)).

In addition to the ongoing human rights abuses, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation in Jammu and Kashmir ([N. A. Bhat, 2020](#); [Khandelwal, 2021](#)). The lockdowns and restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the virus have led to a significant impact on the human rights of the people in the region. The restrictions on movement and access to healthcare have made it difficult for people to seek medical attention, leading to a dire situation for those in need. The restrictions have also made it challenging for children to continue their education, as online classes were made impossible due to the 2G network limit.

Moreover, the economic downturn caused by the pandemic has destroyed many industries, causing even more hardship for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The permanent residents of the former state may lose their jobs under the new rules, further exacerbating the economic difficulties faced by the region. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought even more attention to the already dire situation in Jammu and Kashmir, where the violations of human rights have been ongoing for decades. It is crucial that the international community pays attention to this issue and takes necessary action to address the human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Methods

The article employs a descriptive and analytical approach to provide a critical analysis of democracy and human rights in Jammu and Kashmir. Secondary sources such as reports, articles, and studies from various national and international agencies are used as the primary source of data. The descriptive approach provides a comprehensive overview of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, while the analytical approach aims to examine the causes and consequences of human rights violations in the region. Secondary data sources are commonly used in social science research, especially in studies that focus on analyzing and evaluating social and political phenomena ([Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014](#)).

Such sources can provide a rich and diverse array of information and perspectives that can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem. Moreover, secondary sources are useful in providing context, background, and historical information, which are crucial in understanding the evolution of social and political phenomena ([Williams & Babbie, 1976](#)). They can also be useful in identifying gaps in the existing literature and generating hypotheses that can be tested using primary data sources. Overall, the use of a descriptive and analytical approach, supported by secondary data sources, provides a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex issues related to democracy and human rights in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Results and Discussion

### How Human Rights Violations Happened

Jammu and Kashmir has a long history of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture, sexual violence, and restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. The state has been under a heavy military presence since the early 1990s due to an insurgency that began in the late 1980s. The Indian security forces have been accused of widespread human rights abuses, including extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, torture, and rape.

According to a report by the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), there have been over 70,000 killings, 8,000 enforced disappearances, and 10,000 cases of torture since the insurgency began. The report also highlights the use of draconian laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and the Public Safety Act (PSA), which provide immunity to security forces and allow for arbitrary detentions

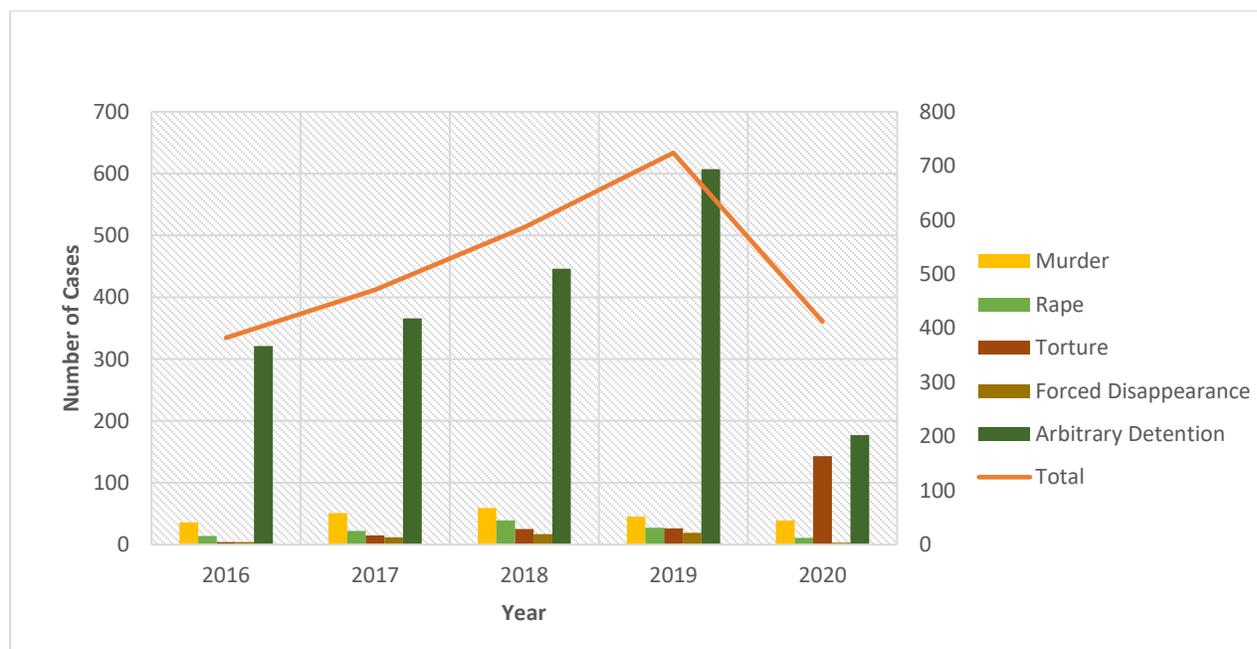
and use of force.

The JKCCS report also documents the use of pellet guns by security forces, resulting in hundreds of cases of blindness and other serious injuries. The report states that the use of pellet guns is a clear violation of international humanitarian law and has caused immense suffering to civilians. In addition to the conflict-related human rights abuses, there have been reports of other forms of human rights violations in J&K. For example, the state has a high rate of child labor, and there have been cases of bonded labor and forced marriage. The state has also been criticized for its treatment of minorities, particularly the Muslim community. Overall, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir remains a cause for concern, with ongoing reports of human rights abuses despite efforts by civil society groups and international organizations to address the issue.

Human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir occur systematically and extensively ([Dixit, 2014](#)). One form of violation is the restriction of freedom of expression and civil rights. This is evident from the arrests and detention of human rights activists, journalists, and social-political activists advocating for the rights of the Kashmiri people. In addition, there is also oppression against minority groups such as women and children. There have been reports of sexual violence and discrimination against women, as well as violations of children's rights related to access to education and healthcare.

Human rights violations also occur in the context of high militarization in Jammu and Kashmir. According to a report by [Qadri \(2019\)](#), military forces often engage in arbitrary actions against civilians such as arrests and torture without fair legal processes. There are several factors that contribute to human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, including politics, armed conflict, and discriminatory treatment by the Indian government. To address this issue, real action needs to be taken by the government to improve the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir ([Sheikh, 2020](#)).

**Figure 1. Human Rights Violations Cases in Jammu and Kashmir**



Note: The cases in 2020 do not include 33 instances of injury, which encompass injuries resulting from the use of force by security personnel.

Source: [Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society \(2020\)](#)

The human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir has been a matter of grave concern over the years, with a significant increase in reported violations. According to the JKCCS, there were 382 reported cases of human rights violations in 2016, including 36 cases of murder, 14 cases of rape, 4 cases of torture, 4 cases of enforced disappearances, and 321 cases of arbitrary detention. In 2017, the number of reported

cases rose to 471, including 51 cases of murder, 22 cases of rape, 15 cases of torture, 12 cases of enforced disappearances, and 366 cases of arbitrary detention. The situation further deteriorated in 2018, with 586 reported cases of human rights violations, including 59 cases of murder, 39 cases of rape, 25 cases of torture, 17 cases of enforced disappearances, and 446 cases of arbitrary detention. In 2019, the number of reported cases peaked at 724, including 45 cases of murder, 27 cases of rape, 26 cases of torture, 19 cases of enforced disappearances, and 607 cases of arbitrary detention. According to the JKCCS annual report for 2020, there were a total of 412 documented cases of human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, an increase from the previous year's total of 233 cases.

These cases can be classified into several categories: 39 cases of murder, including extrajudicial killings, deaths related to torture, and deaths in custody; 3 cases of disappearances, including enforced disappearances and abductions; 143 cases of torture, including torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; 177 cases of arbitrary detention, including detention without charge or trial and preventive detention; 11 cases of sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault; and 33 cases of injury, including injuries resulting from the use of force by security forces. This data indicates a worrying trend of human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir, with a significant increase in cases from the previous year. These violations continue to have a detrimental impact on the lives of individuals and communities in the region, and it is crucial for the government and the international community to take action to address and prevent these violations.

### **Covid 19 and Human Rights Violations in Jammu and Kashmir**

The Indian government's decision to suspend Article 370 and the state's constitution in Jammu and Kashmir has had far-reaching consequences for the region's economy ([I. A. Bhat, 2017](#); [Pavagadhi, 2012](#)), healthcare access ([Connah, 2021](#)), media independence (Joseph, 2000; Reshii, 2015), and democratic representation ([Jahangir & Shafi, 2013](#)). The Jammu and Kashmir Human Rights Forum conducted a report from August 4, 2019, to July 19, 2020, documenting the ongoing human rights abuses resulting from these actions.

One of the most significant impacts of the suspension of Article 370 and the state's constitution was the detention of nearly all elected legislators in Jammu and Kashmir, except those from the BJP, as well as the closure of schools, markets, and parks for weeks. The people of Jammu and Kashmir were left without an elected representative, leading to a sense of political disenfranchisement. The government also abolished state commissions on human rights, women's and child rights, anti-corruption, and information freedom, further restricting civil liberties in the region.

These actions have also had significant economic consequences, with the Jammu and Kashmir economy suffering for eleven months. The healthcare sector has been particularly affected by curfews and other restrictions, leading to limited healthcare access. Meanwhile, local and regional media have lost their independence, with journalists targeted under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). Lack of audience, readership, and revenue have forced dozens of journalists out.

Furthermore, the uncertainty about new policies, such as the domicile rules, has caused economic distress, leading to an increase in the military presence in the region's hinterland and along the border. Kashmiris feel cut off from India, leading to social and emotional trauma and stress among residents of Jammu and Kashmir. The Jammu and Kashmir Human Rights Forum report concludes that the suspension of Article 370 and the state's constitution has prioritized people's safety and individuals over human rights, leading to widespread human rights violations, including the suspension of constitutional protections like habeas corpus and restrictions on arresting and detaining minors. Dissent has been stifled by draconian laws like the PSA and the UAPA, causing further harm to public safety and residents' mental health.

In conclusion, the Indian government's decision to suspend Article 370 and the state's constitution in Jammu and Kashmir has had severe consequences for the region, including economic downturn, limited healthcare access, media independence, and democratic representation, leading to widespread human rights violations. It is essential to ensure the restoration of democracy, human rights, and civil liberties in Jammu and Kashmir to ensure the well-being of its residents.

The report by the Jammu and Kashmir Human Rights Forum details on-going human rights abuses in the

former state from August 4, 2019, to July 19, 2020. The report found that people's safety and civilians have been prioritized over human rights, resulting in widespread violations such as suspension of constitutional protections like habeas corpus or restrictions on arresting and detaining minors. Draconian laws like the PSA and the UAPA have been used to stifle dissent.

Additionally, the 11-month lockdown, which harmed public health and infringed on residents' constitutional rights to health and medical care, also caused trauma and stress among residents of Jammu and Kashmir. Children have been particularly affected, as there were only 100 school days in 2019 and 2020, and the 2G network limit after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown made online classes impossible. This violates the Indian and Jammu and Kashmir constitutions' guarantee of equal access to education.

Furthermore, all local and regional businesses have lost money, with tourists and cottage owners heavily relying on the 4G networks available across Canada. The UAPA has targeted journalists, and the lack of audience, readership, and revenue has forced dozens of journalists out. The Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) has stifled press freedom and expression. The Jammu and Kashmir government's designation of "strategic" areas suggests a further increase in military presence in the hinterland and along the border. This economic downturn has destroyed many industries, and permanent residents of the former state of Jammu and Kashmir may lose their jobs under the new rules.

The lockdown has resulted in trauma and stress among residents, particularly children, and businesses have suffered significant losses. The targeting of journalists and the stifling of press freedom and expression is also concerning. The increase in military presence may lead to further human rights violations, and the economic downturn has had a severe impact on local industries and employment. It is imperative that steps are taken to address these issues and ensure that the human rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir are protected. The study also found that the government's prioritization of safety and security over human rights has led to widespread violations of constitutional protections like habeas corpus and restrictions on arresting and detaining minors. Draconian laws such as the PSA and the UAPA have been used to stifle dissent and curtail fundamental rights.

Furthermore, the 11-month lockdown imposed in the region has not only infringed on residents' constitutional right to health and medical care but also led to a significant impact on public safety, causing trauma and stress among the population. The closure of schools for almost a year, with only 100 school days in 2019 and 2020, has had a detrimental effect on education, particularly for children. The 2G network limit after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown made online classes impossible, directly affecting the constitutional right to education guaranteed by the Indian and Jammu and Kashmir constitutions.

Finally, the study highlights the suggestion of a further increase in military presence in the hinterland and along the border, as suggested by the Jammu and Kashmir government's designation of "strategic" areas. This move has destroyed many industries, and permanent residents of the former state of Jammu and Kashmir may lose their jobs under the new rules. Overall, the study provides evidence of ongoing human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir, revealing how the government's prioritization of safety and security has led to the widespread violation of fundamental rights and freedoms. The report emphasizes the importance of addressing these violations and restoring the constitutional rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

### **Security Measures and Socio-Economic Consequences in Jammu and Kashmir Post Article 370 Abrogation**

Prior to the abolishment of Article 370 from the Indian constitution on August 4, 2019, Jammu and Kashmir was enforced into a full lockdown. An additional 38,000 troops were deployed, leading to the shutdown of markets, schools, and public spaces, accompanied by the discontinuation of internet and phone services. A large number of residents, including elected officials (excluding BJP members), were placed under preventive detention. Days later, the region was bifurcated into two Union Territories via the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act, and subsequently, national politicians were prohibited from entering.

This eleven-month long lockdown had disastrous implications. Industries faced a severe crisis, pushing many into loan defaults or shutdowns; countless people lost their jobs or experienced wage reductions;

the closures of educational institutions disrupted education significantly; and healthcare became restricted. The media's independence was also significantly diminished.

In the absence of elected representatives to defend the residents of Jammu and Kashmir, as most were under preventive detention, there was no political advocacy for the people. Upon release, many leaders had to promise not to criticize government actions. State commissions, such as those for human rights and anti-corruption, ceased to exist after the state's division, and the Central Government did not reestablish them. Consequently, residents of Jammu and Kashmir became largely alienated from the rest of the country. While the stringent lockdown did result in a reduction of terrorist incidents, it also saw an increase in attempted infiltrations and cease-fire violations. Moreover, the extended lockdown, mass arrests and detentions, and restrictions on media and internet services sparked widespread unrest, particularly among the youth.

The lockdown strategy resulted in a compromise of freedoms and political rights in Jammu and Kashmir. The ban on 4G networks, for instance, although beneficial in curbing militant activities, inflicted significant harm on people's daily lives, affecting industries, healthcare, education, and the media. Furthermore, a shift in political dynamics that positioned the military as the primary enforcer, rather than focusing on counter-insurgency operations, caused additional distress.

The region's administration, in introducing new media policies and modifying existing acts, prioritized security over public and human rights. The decision to designate parts of the former state as 'strategic areas' for army development suggests an increased, long-term military presence. This move contrasts the previous approach of reducing military presence in crowded city areas during times of declining conflict. The earlier peace-building policy now appears to have been abandoned.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the human rights violation situation in the Jammu and Kashmir region is indeed a serious and complex issue. This research successfully revealed various forms of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, sexual violence, and restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. The results of this study also indicate the presence of various laws that provide immunity for security forces, such as the AFSPA and PSA, which lead to abuse of power and more widespread human rights violations.

The socio-economic consequences of human rights violations in this region are also very significant. Issues such as child labor, forced labor, and forced marriages add to the complexity and suffering of the local population. This turmoil also results in discriminatory treatment against minority groups, particularly the Muslim community. Researchers emphasize the importance of concrete steps and actions from the government and international community in addressing the human rights crisis situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Law enforcement and accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations must be a top priority. Additionally, there needs to be a change or amendment in the laws that provide immunity for security forces to stop the abuse of power and ensure justice for victims.

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