

## **VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

The population of women is almost half the human population. Still they are not treated equally in the society. Though women are provided some guarantee of equality, nonetheless their position is secondary in the society. They are still victims of drab norms and customs existing in our societies that have weakened women's position leaving them at the mercy of man. The victimization of women can be explained in terms of rape, molestation of women, eve teasing, dowry deaths, prostitution and Inheritance disparities etc. The gender biases, which exist through out the globe, have placed women at the disadvantageous position. The worst form of gender bias is seen in the physical and psychological violence committed against women in one form or other.

The violence and crime against women is on the increase. Indian law provides a number of safeguards to women in terms of special status under Indian constitution; Art 15 provides that state can make the law for betterment of women. But nevertheless women are the victims of violence at home and at work place.

Apart from domestic violence, women in Kashmir face some additional problems as a consequence of conflict. Financial difficulties, psychological downfall, emotional stress, denial of inheritance /due rights, sexual harassment, physical insecurity, social undesirability, loosing control over children, mismanagement of home affairs, social security and apathy, dead husband liabilities, dependence on relatives and others, harassment by in- laws, loneliness, over- burden with domestic violence and other works and inferiority complex, are some of the common examples of post conflict effects.

Women in Kashmir have been direct as well as indirect victims of violence. They have been killed in crossfire, shot in public demonstrations, blown up in grenade explosions or in shelling along the line of control (LOC), raped by the security forces, by anti-government militants and by pro-government militants. And they have been indirect victims of violence as widows, half-widows or happen to be relatives of victim of violence.

Proverbial statements about women being second-class citizens are familiar in many societies. It is vitally important to challenge the many barriers to full citizenship that confront women, and barriers to women's human rights in general. The denial of equal citizenship to women is a phenomenon familiar in many parts of the world, but it assumes alarming proportions in societies that are still largely 'pre-modern.

Women's property rights have been on the policy agenda in India for at least the last 20 years. Yet not much has happened on the ground. Consequently, more than gender identities, it is other crosscutting identities of ethnicity, education, kinship relations and marital status that both motivate women to stake their claims to land as well as oppose the claims of other women and men. Secondly, women's land claims seem to have a chance of becoming effective only if they have some male support.

In the era of women empowerment, were women are granted equal social and political rights, less has been done to ensure her inheritance claims. In Kashmir a major problem that confronts women is the denial of her inheritance rights especially to women in rural areas; be a violence victim or non-victim. In rural Kashmir, old norms still exist and are being implemented barring developmental process.

"The patriarchal bias of Indian policy and administrative machinery strongly militates against women receiving equal attention in aid and property distribution. Moreover, distributive mechanisms and processes require much time and attention, which the woman is usually unable to devote, being compelled to focus on the satisfaction of immediate and survival needs of the dependant family".

Therefore unless women rights are respected and enforced, peace cannot prevail. Women unaware of their rights and options available to them in conflict have undergone a major transformation. A transformation of roles, to be able to uphold dead husband liabilities and to cope with tremendous social and psychological pressure.

Most of the violence victims for no support-moral or financial face severe problems. As rights of women are not enforced, Women have no choice but to go for begging or land up being exploited at the hands of some people having vested interests.

On October 8, 2005, a major earthquake hit Kashmir resulting in colossal damage. Having its epicenter in Muzaffarabad, the quake measured 6.5 on Richter scale with its magnitude in about 7.6 in Pakistan. Never in a century has any earthquake of such magnitude shake the region of Jammu and Kashmir in both parts of India and Pakistan with entire villages and its populace completely ruined. The loss of life is immense. Children have been orphaned, parents rendered childless, some have lost one; while others have their families entirely wiped out. Thousands have been rendered homeless compelling people to live under open sky in harsh cold weather. Hundreds buried under rubble.

Kashmir has suffered the most human fatalities 1000 plus and infrastructure and other property damage after Pakistan in which approximately 40,000 people were killed in the catastrophic earthquake. The death toll in October 8<sup>th</sup>'s powerful earthquake, in Indian-occupied Kashmir, now, stands at 944, officials say. Over 2,300 people have been injured and some 4,000 houses were damaged.

Families lost everything as the earthquake rocked their homes and thousands rendered unfit for human habitation in different villages.

In the words of Kofi Anna, the effects of the tragedy will largely fade from the front pages and from prime time news. Therefore, it is vitally important that we have someone capable of sustaining interest in the fate of the survivors and their communities.

NGO's and voluntary organizations started collecting relief. The relief distribution has been a challenging task. Relief to inaccessible areas, where people are in immediate need, is a gigantic task with numerous challenges. It has been a testing time. When we need to respond to the situation and rise to the occasion to support the victims of disaster, not only materially but also emotionally.

To face this tragedy various voluntary organizations took initiative named *ATHROT*, a relief action programme for the earthquake victims. *ATHROT* is a collective effort of independent voluntary organizations and individuals like *Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, Kashmiri Women's Initiative for Peace and Disarmament, Alig Foundation (Srinagar), Kashmir Times Publications, Jammu and Kashmir Yateem Foundation, Doctors Offering Care, Help Poor Voluntary Trust, Friends of Humanity, Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, Students' Helpline, Apna Ghar, Youth for Humanity, Firdous Educational Trust for Orphans (FETO), M.D. Foundation, Bar Association Budgam, students from Kashmir University and various Colleges and members from Business community.*

The purpose of the initiative is to coordinate the efforts of the voluntary organizations and the individuals to put up a united, organized, concerted and sustained effort with short term and long-term programme for the rehabilitation of the victims particularly in inaccessible areas.

For this purpose *ATHROT* opened centres at several places like Uri, Salamabad, Karna, Tangdar, Teetwal, Keran, Machil in District Kupwara for relief distribution. From each of these areas, *ATHROT* adopted the one worst hit village. The relief work was divided into two phases:

- Immediate relief plan
- Future rehabilitation work

In the immediate action plan, focus was laid on providing shelter, food and basic amenities essential for sustenance. For shelter, Tin (GCI sheets), nails and tool kits worth 20,00,000 rupees were distributed. Blankets and Thermocol for flooring costing 3,00,000 were provided to earthquake victims. Eatables and warm clothes worth 4,00,000 were also distributed.

In collaboration with MD Foundation, Doctors Offering Care and Help Poor Voluntary Trust, Athrot, initiated a medical programme in different villages in Uri and Tangdar in which free medical checks and medicines worth 6,00,000 were distributed.

From the contributions of MD Foundation and JKCCS, *ATHROT* was able to collect tents and sleeping bags worth 3,00,000, which were distributed among the victims.

On the eve of Eid on 4<sup>th</sup> November, *ATHROT* decided to celebrate it with the earthquake victims. Food items worth 45,000 were taken to the adopted areas and distributed among the victims.

On 15<sup>th</sup> November, KWIPD organized a medical and counseling camp in Julla, the base camp for Ath'rot in Uri. A team of doctors visited the area and provided free medical check up to the victims most of whom suffer mal nutrition and infection following unhygienic conditions. Free medicines were also provided.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> December, KWIPD distributed 500 jackets; bags, books and other stationary items were provided to the children in the area. On the day, there were several programmes organized by the victim children. On the occasion, children also presented different programme on music and dance.

The idea to chose the Julla area as base camp, as it is centrally located in Kupwara. The sustained activities were done in phase wise manner with the help of ATHROT members, Volunteers and local people.

An interaction with the victims, help the KWIPD in accessing their conditions properly, which made them (members) to access the situation more justly. Almost all the beneficiaries had a horrifying tale to tell but they were still hopeful. The visiting team of KWIPD was touched by the courage and valour of the victims.

KWIPD at the end of the day observed that shared and sustained efforts are needed to help the victims out of the trouble and lot needs to be done.

## **DISCRIMINATORY CUSTOMARY RULES VALLEY; WOMEN WALK ON DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD** **By Afsana Rashid & Tabasum**

In certain pockets of the Valley, the women, on account of certain customs, are debarred of their share in the parental property, despite the fact that Muslim Personal Law guides and governs her right to inherit. And in presence of the sacrosanct laws, customs no matter how traditional they are, stand nullified.

After the death of her husband, about eight years ago, Hajra Begum (name changed) finds her existence "a burden". Fate has not been kind enough to her since she lost her husband. Hajra's son Altaf (name changed) denies her any share in the property, which was raised by her and her husband on their own. Hajra does not get even any benefit incurred from the property.

Soon after her husband's death, Altaf began torturing his mother and then two unwed sisters both physically and mentally. " He would come up in mid night and start beating us. Sometimes he would go to the extent of pulling out hair of our mother. On asking for his action, he would order us to leave the place and all property claims. But we had no one on whom we could rely upon, as such had to bear all his nuisance" sobs Salma- Hajira's younger daughter holding her mothers hands firmly.

Some year's back during winter, Altaf locked all the rooms of the house including bathroom. Hajira along with her two daughters was confined to a small room with no facilities for fifteen days. "It was a horrible time, foodless and without amenities of power or laxation we were confined to the room on the mercy of god," recalls Hajira. It was the local intervention that provided some relief to the family.

In order to support their mother, the two sisters started embroidery work. As life was getting hard to manage and in view of their growing age Salma and Ruby (both names changed) were married to some distant relative on pity grounds.

Hajira was left alone at the mercy of Altaf who constantly abused her, torturing her frequently to go for a second marriage and give up her right over the present property. "He would beat me ruthlessly, gagging my mouth with a piece of cloth and threaten me of dire consequences if I failed to go for re-marriage" with eyes bow down in shame, Hajira snivels.

"During this period he would beat and put her behind the lock. No relative was allowed to visit her and even if they tried to they were either humiliated or he lodged FIR charging them with various charges. So no relative dared to visit her to know about her well-being", added the three sisters who allege that they are living under a constant threat from their brother.

Frozen at her plight, Salma took Hajira to her home for three moths. Afterwards it was decided that each daughter would place Hajira with her for three months on shifts.

"Earlier, prior to our marriage, our brother inflicted torture over us too and situation has not changed even today. He denies us any share in our parental property on the ground that we are married outside the native villages", said Ruby his youngest sister.

To deprive them of their share he makes claim of existence of some custom wherein daughters married outside the village are not entitled to inherit from the property of their father and the widow gets only a life interest in the property of her husband. He denies their status as joint owners to the property, alleged the sisters. The custom that he pleads exists nowhere and in our village daughters are paid the share as per the wish of their elders and status of the family, they added.

Their father died leaving behind a house and thirty kanals of land at Ganderbal in the outskirts of Srinagar district, where an orchard exists on more than half of the landed estate, said the mother. "His father wanted to disown him during his lifetime because of his evil deeds but we insisted him not to do so as that would ruin his life. But see what fate had in store for us", she lamented and wept bitterly.

"I am waiting for the day when either he will be punished for his bad deeds or I will leave for heaven", she added. His three sisters plead the same woes and worry that how long can their mother stay with her daughters in their

in-laws house but they can not even risk their mother's life by leaving her alone in her own house. "We are caught in a fix and we do not know what to do", they urged.

The family, which had remained silent for long, no longer to bear his obnoxious behavior sought local help. The case was put before the local authorities. Seven village heads (*Maqdamas*) reviewed the case and gave decision in favor of Hajira. At that time, Altaf had obliged to give due share to his sisters but refused to part it with Hajira. However till date he has been dilly-dallying the authorities without any respite to Hajira's grief. With things not moving in their favor, the mother and daughters have moved to court for justice but there too nothing seems to work for the time being. "Let us see how things work for us now", they stated. Many such unreported cases exist in the Valley wherein women face gender discrimination not only in the society but also within the family itself. Talking to various experts in this respect brought forth certain things. Customary rule that hits Muslim Personnel Law, in the given case the daughters share, holds no authenticity believes Mohammad Hussain, a lecturer in the Faculty of Law, University of Kashmir. "As far as my knowledge goes, no such custom exists or prevails in Ganderbal. Though in Pahalgam, there are certain areas where the rudiments of the customary law still exist", he said.

A senior professor in the Faculty of Law puts the entire case as, "A share is prescribed for them as per the Holy Quran and the customary rule that is in violation to it stands invalid. In Kashmir, usually daughters are not provided their share. This is immensely wrong. They too have a share and no body can deny that. Widow's right of retention is there and as per that she can not sell the property but can retain that till she re-marries. It is unfortunate that throughout world they avail this right but not in the Valley which is really unfortunate", he stressed.

Muslims are governed by the Islamic Law and customary law stands next, holds Prince Ahmad, an advocate. "If there is no law available with reference to any case only then customary law can be pleaded but in presence of the same customary rule stands null and void", he pointed. His counterpart Chowdhary Shafqat considers the situation in violation to Muslim law.

"This can not be justified. A custom is a custom and not a law. According to *Shariah*, daughters ought to get their share and no body can deny that. One has to follow the religion and nothing is above that. Besides, they can plead indiscriminate meted out to them on the basis of gender", she stated. It is against Islamic Law said Pervez Imroz, patron J&K Coalition of Civil Societies. "On one side campaigns are going all around the world about women rights and on other side such cases prevail. This is indeed injustice meted out to them", he said.

The society, in my opinion should take serious view of the custom still prevalent in some pockets which are used as an alibi and excuse to deny the legitimate rights and privileges of the people especially the weaker section of the society, women and children said Nasir Mirza, Head of the Department, Media Education Research Centre (MERC), University of Kashmir.

In this particular case the Muslim scholars and the personal Law Board authorities besides the law enforcing authorities should take cognizance of the situation and ensure that justice is done and the rights are restored to the women in question, he added. "An awareness campaign needs to be undertaken by the society to inform its constituents about the provisions and the rights and privileges they are entitled to as per the Personal Law and as per the laws governing them", he suggested.

## **FORCED SEND ACROSS, MOTHER WAITS FOR HIS SON**

**By: Tabasum Ishtiaq**

For Fatima Bi time has struck forever. Living in past, Fatima is unaware of human development except for man made means of destruction which she has seen for more than a decade. Cut off from the valley, nearly 120kms from Srinagar in the lap of - Pir Panjal mountain ranges and just below the Nanak post- the last Indian army post that was recently in news in the killing of four ex-infiltrators in Batar resides Fatima bi.

Greek featured seventy-year-old Fatima belongs to Pahari tribe that has been living on the mountainous terrains of the valley for over than a century. Oldest in the village, a wrinkled weak body, Fatima suffers from Cataract (eye disease) and Asthma (breathlessness) apart from general body weakness.

Fatima resides separately with her husband at Batar (IOK) housing 32 families scattered all over the area in a stone house. Since past decade Batar is witness to a growing tendency of nuclear families in the village. Her two sons reside next to her while one lives in Khan Muri (POK), which is a 15 minutes walking distance from Batar. Fatima has two daughters also who are married.

In 1992, Fatima's eldest son Ahmed Din (named changed) was forced to flee across the border to Khan Muri in POK by Indian armed forces. In early 90's uprising, people residing in border areas were forced to migrate

to other places or cross the border in view of the increasing atrocities committed by the security forces, threat perceptions and intense mining of the areas, which has cost life and massive destruction. In Batar many people have been rendered handicap in incidents of mine explosions. Apart, many upfront people who took part in demonstrations and protests were forcibly sent across for spying purposes.

It has been 15 years since Ahmed was made to cross LOC. Till date Fatima has not for even once seen his son. "It has been 15 long years since I have seen him. The irony of the fate is that though he lives 1km from here, I cannot go and meet him, neither can he come to meet us here. No one can understand my pain. Only a mother can understand what it feels to be away from your son that too when you know he is not far" says Fatima Bi.

Fatima Bi has lost all connections with Ahmed Din except for the communication link through letters, which Din sends once two months or so. This link is the only source of assurance of Ahmed's safety for Fatima. "Ever since he was made to cross he sent letters to us. Being illiterate, I make someone read his letters to me and whenever I think of him, I ask someone to re-read his letters. This way I feel happy" says Fatima Bi holding Ahmed Din's letters. In times of peace disrupt between India and Pakistan, this communication link is hampered for months or weeks depending upon the intensity of the situation.

"In times of tension, we get out of touch. It is a phase that worries me most" Says Fatima Bi Ahmed Din got married in POK and started his business there and is better off than his two brothers. "I have only one regret that I cannot see him otherwise I am thankful to God that he is there happy and quite successful unlike his two brothers" Fatima's eyes glisten as she narrates in her native *Pahari* accent. The older generation in Batar is completely illiterate, ignorant and most of them have never moved outside Uri including Fatima Bi who in her whole life has crossed only till *Sharda Sharief* a holy shrine at the foothills and two kms from Batar.

"The eldest generation in the village is illiterate but we want our future generation to be educated and aware of the life outside. Govt. had started a school with one teacher but he comes rarely" ponders Fatima Bi gazing across the fields.

Most of the families in Batar depend on farming for their survival. But since conflict began the army has mined all the agricultural land. Therefore the only option left for the people is to work as porters for army or work as laborers in the downtown areas. "We depend on farming for living. Since fields are mined, we work either as porters or do menial jobs. The question of existence becomes too difficult in winters as Batar faces the heaviest snowfall as compared to any other part of the valley. As such we are forced to stay indoor and survive on whatever we have," narrates Fatima's husband Ghulam apprehensive of the approaching winter.

Like Fatima, Ghulam too suffers Asthma and arthritis. "We have no dispensary or hospital nearby. For medical aid we have to walk down 5kms across the rough, narrow and dangerous mountainous terrains. We don't have even enough money to go to city for medical aid," adds Ghulam amidst brief cough chokes.

Through letters Ahmed din has often asked Fatima Bi to come over to her. But inspite of several pleas to army officials to let her cross over and meet her son Fatima has lost all hope to see Ahmed again in her life. "I want to see him once before I die but I know it's not possible. Still I am thankful to Allah that he crossed over and has more option to life than his brothers here.

The Oct 8, earthquake that swept across the south East Asia with its epicenter at Muzaffarabad caused heavy destruction in both Indian and Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Fatima Bi and his family is one amongst the unfortunate survivors who lost all in the rubble.

"I already had so many problem that god once again tested me", says Fatima who lives in a makeshift house provided by Ath'rot. "We all are fine and I have no complaints. I have been informed that Ahmed Din is fine and has minor house damage. But I believe all will be fine" speaks Fatima Bi with a strange conviction in her eyes.

Fatima Bi is not an only case in Batar. Batar is full of such Fatima Bi's who wait endlessly for their son's across the line of control.

## **THE TRAUMA DOES NOT END HERE**

**By: Tabasum Ishtiaq**

**September:** People had never thought that their fight to know about the whereabouts of their dear ones would strain their relations. Women fighting for justice against their family wishes including many of who are ready to compromise,

face severe resentment and in some cases get abandoned. Their search for justice is a cause of annoyance to their families, who advise them to dump their fight against the establishment and accept government compensation.

However, this is not the case of a woman or two but most of the women folk among the relatives of the disappeared persons go through the same trauma. "As if the trauma and suffering through which I went was not enough that now my family punishes me for seeking justice", expressed an 65 year old Raja (Name changed), whose three sons got killed and one was subjected to enforced disappearance by the Indian forces.

Raja's youngest son snapped all ties with her following a delusion that she received money for participating in APDP activities. "My son deserted me at a time when I needed him most. Its not the killing of his brothers, disappearance of another and my ardent efforts all these years that concern him but money which he believe we get from APDP- The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons that came into formation in 1994, by the relatives of disappeared persons, to seek their whereabouts. It is ridiculous, I am fighting for my son and his brother and he believes I cache money, how insensitive", she added.

Its not lack of consideration on part of the children only, some of them are even exasperated by their husbands. "I have been ordered by my husband to compromise instead of fighting for justice, compromise on the fate of my dear one whose whereabouts I seek from last many years", gushed a 70-year-old Rahti (name changed) woman whose son got subjected to enforced disappearance in 1993.

Hajra is another woman victimized by her family. Her life has been roller-coaster drive from the very beginning. Just from the initiation of the armed struggle in Jammu and Kashmir, Hajra lost her dear ones at regular intervals. Nevertheless, her agony has been over shadowed by the attitude of one of her sons. She is one of the members of Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) as her son Bashir Ahmad Sofi is among the thousands of persons who were subjected to Enforced Involuntary Disappearance by the Indian forces.

Hajra's son, Fayaz Ahmad has snapped his ties with her and his blind father. He believes that she is regularly being paid for her activism as a member of APDP. "He thinks I am being paid for it and my daughters are the beneficiary", Hajra expressed while talking to "Voices Unheard"

The inconsiderateness on part of the family members of the parents of the disappeared persons regarding seeking justice has caused grave tension for the women pursuing their cases through APDP.

## **NATURE'S FURY EXTINGUISHES THE LAST HOPE**

**By: Nazoora Hamid**

People living on the border areas have been already facing much that nature's fury shook and blew of the even last of their hopes. Ever since the conflict gripped the valley, the border areas of Tangdar, Uri, Poonch and others faced severe loss of life and massive physical destruction. Hundreds of people have been killed in cross border shelling, more left injured and incapacitated. Tremendous casualties have been inflicted causing massive destruction. It had been a year that things have been moving in for betterment and now nature's harshness hit leaving hundreds of them dead, equal injured and many more have been rendered homeless without any basic amenities.

Women destitute of violence residing in the border areas have been the worst hit in this earthquake. Living their lives in abject poverty and under non standards of living, these women strive every second and every moment of their life for their sustenance. Further adding to their pathetic condition, the tremor of October 8 left them shelter less, foodless and without aid. The approaching winter is an adding alarm to their miserable condition.

For 13-year-old Hajira (name changed) life changed so suddenly and harshly leaving her alone with two minor sisters. Four years back, Hajira lost her father in crossfire. Since then Hajira's mother and grandmother toiled hard to support their families. "Both my mother and grand mother worked hard but it didn't suffice our needs. Our plight moved our neighbors to provide us local assistance," laments Hajira with tearful eyes.

Even in such situation, Hajira's family never gave up. I thought at least we have shelter to hide ourselves but now we are left with nothing at all. "My grand mothers health for exhaustive work kept on deteriorating. This shifted the entire burden on my mother. She worked hard day and night to meet the ends and never even once made us feel the misery and gloom that shrouded our lives," adds Hajira now crying uncontrollably.

In October 8 massive earthquake that shook and brought to dust thousand of lives on both sides of the line of control, Hajira lost her everything, protective care and shelter. In the disastrous incident Hajira's mother and grandmother were killed while their house turned to rubble leaving the three sisters to the mercy of their fate. Continuing their education in a government school with the help of local authorities, Hajira and her two minor sisters sob bitterly over their helpless state.

"We have no one. Where will we go, who will take care of my sisters? Why did we survive? It would had been better if we would have got killed too" wails Hajira in whose lap 7 year old Muni rests. Hajira constantly glances at her helpless sisters and the memories haunt her.

“ I was outside playing with my younger sisters while my mother and grandmother were busy inside. Suddenly earth began spinning and in just a fraction of time, the whole house collapsed to ground. I kept screaming for them but no reply came and finally some neighbors took me along with my sisters to their place” Says Hajira with a hope that her mother will be alive.

“She can't leave us in a lurch. She had been so protective how could God snatch her from us. We have none to take care. I pray she will be back”. Amidst hopelessness, Hajira gives hope to her younger sisters who clutch to her, as they would have clinged to their mother.

## **MISSING OR DEAD RELATIVES; UNENDING TRAUMA FOR FAMILY MEMBER**

**By: Afsana Rashid**

**Srinagar, December 10:** Visiting officials, she believes would help her to raise her children, Roshan Jan, can be seen struggling from pillar to post pillar. "Come tomorrow" is the answer she always gets. "I speak to every person I find can be of any help to me. Mostly, with a hope that someone would listen to me and help me to put an end to this misery, but nothing seems to happen", says Roshan in a dejected tone. Hailing from Brari Aangan, Anantnag a remote village in South Kashmir, Roshan finds it hard to make an earning for the family who has lost two sons to the ongoing conflict. Her mother-in-law, Reshma Jan too feels duped at the hands of the government.

Reshma Jan, a widow lost her two sons, Khurshed Khan (22) and Rashid Khan (40). "I am yet to receive compensation, in the form of compassionate appointment for the killing of my younger son. No compensation has been given to us after the brutal killing of another son", she narrated. Though authorities had promised a job within seven days after Rashid Khan's murder but nothing has been received as yet, maintained Roshan Jan, wife of Rashid Khan. Death of two male members has brought poverty apart from trauma to Reshma Jan's family. "Rashid's murder continues to haunt me as I see his innocent children and young wife. I feel helpless when his children ask for food and there is not enough to feed them", she said with tears rolling down her cheeks coupled with a loud wail in a typical Gujjar accent.

Rashid Khan is survived with five daughters and three sons, Razia (21) the eldest and 3 year old Shahida, the youngest. The family strives hard to sustain and the two women, Roshan and Reshma, try to pool their efforts to keep the pot boiling.

"Police confirmed the involvement of its men in the incident and even the then Chief minister ordered the immediate action against the culprits. Despite all this, no compensation has been paid to us and we require the assistance to fulfill the needs and demands of the family", they pleaded. True, compensation cannot replace the loss of the human lives but at least it can minimize their miseries. Such uncounted incidents need to be given the first priority so that they too can live a life with dignity. The story does not end here.

Tragedy writ large on the faces of those innocent but "unfortunates" who are left all alone to face the hard-core realities of life. The age that could have blossomed in happiness and freedom leave them to mourn the loss of their parents and face the sufferings later on.

Tabassum a young girl burst into tears when she was asked to recount the incident that killed her father. Another girl Ruqaya a victim of similar fate revealed that her father, an auto driver, stands missing for the last five years. "We tried all our efforts to locate him but he continues to remain untraced", she emphasized. Report by the amnesty International in 1995 documented over 700 cases of deaths in custody. In January 1997 the J&K Bar Association documented 218 deaths in custody.

J&K State Human Rights Commission constituted in 1997 has registered 3187 number of cases during this period out of which 2112 numbers are disposed of. However, the statistics provided by a study conducted by S. Mir, ex-student in Faculty of Law, University of Kashmir showed 273, 212 and 170 as total killings among civilians in October, November and December 1996 respectively out of which 20,18 and 16 are those killed in custody.

## **HR VIOLATIONS; LIFELONG SCAR FOR VICTIMS**

**Afsana Rashid**

Srinagar December 9: Five year old Tahir Javeed Ganai hides himself, in whatever he can, whenever he sights people in khaki (uniform). Normally he avoids eye-to-eye contact and mostly observes silence.

Having retreated into some kind of shell he talks barely. It takes a lot of cajoling to spill a chilling narrative, which no five year old should undergo.

Hailing from district Doda, Tahir narrated, " They killed my father and shot at my right leg. I was hospitalized and on my return, I found my father dead and the house we lived in turned to rubble.

The speech muffles and the lips gulp back the words leaving the rest to be conveyed by his cold silence and tears.

Though fortunate to find himself enrolled with one of the orphanages functioning in the valley, Tahir prefers to observe silence.

"Breaking the silence midway, he says, "they used to ill treat me once I was at home but now even if I visit them, they treat me well as I now live in the hostel". Tahir is unaware of the fact that he puts up in a local orphanage.

After the death of his father, Tahir lived with his uncle for sometime who finally brought him all the way from Doda to an orphanage in Srinagar. Despite all this, Tahir repeatedly points that he has a family in Doda whom he misses badly. This effect is the crux of all such victims.

Apart from overcoming the physical trauma, they get inflicted with the psychological abuse.

"Now I am grown up and I will get justice", believes Sheikh Sajad, the only son of Master Muhammad Afzal Sheikh of village Muran in Pulwama. Fourteen years ago, the intervening night of 27-28 December witnessed the arrest of MA Sheikh along with four other villagers by 142 battalion of BSF (then) stationed at Bunoora Pulwama, reveal the family members of Sheikh.

"Since then his whereabouts could not be traced. FIR was lodged in police station Pulwama under no 79/92U/S365 RPC. But all in vain" they informed. When villagers approached battalion commander BSF Pulwama, he denied custody of Sheikh.

Few days later all the four villagers were released who denied having any knowledge about him.

This made the problem more gruesome for the family members and their efforts to trace him doubled, they added.

Sheikh Sajjad witness to all these sufferings borne by the family decided to file a suit; the family had already filed a case in the High court to seek justice. " Now I want to follow the case as I have grown up and I am hopeful to get justice", he said.

Saja Begum, Sajjad's mother is still hopeful of her husbands return. " I cannot say whether he is alive or dead but I am sure that we will see him one day," she said. Pleading her husband's innocence, she stressed that he was a schoolteacher.

## VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

By: Umi

**November 17:** Uncertainty and grief writs large on the people of Kashmir especially women victims of political violence. The fear of unknown, a coldness and fight for survival all envelope the life in Kashmir.

Mujtaba Buch was watching the breaking news of the deadly explosion outside the J&K Banks corporate office here, on TV. Fear struck his mind, as he turned apprehensive about the fate of his sister who usually at that time takes the route to her office. In no time the fears came when his mobile rang informing him that his sister wounded in the blast has been taken to SMHS hospital for treatment.

Buch who was on a bed rest due to slip disk had no option but to rush to the hospital. In the trauma unit of SMHS hospital her sister Farhat Shaheen had suffered multiple splinter injuries all over her body. She was lying on the bed unable to speak, in a semi conscious condition. Crying in pain, the middle-aged woman moaned occasionally.

Some female relatives surrounded her as one of them examined wounds on her body from underneath the blanket that covered her.

Shaheen a manager with co-operative Bank was waiting for a bus to her office in Barzulla when the explosion rocked the area. Unfortunately unlike other days, on the fateful day her husband had dropped her half way instead of her office.

Shaheen was one of the many wounded patients whose pathetic cries moved everyone's heart, evoking a tearful response. Most of the patients were unable to speak due to injuries on their face.

At the first bed in the trauma unit, was lying a college student Shazia Mufti a resident of Buchpora who got injured while traveling by a Tata bus. She was on her way to appear in the BA Final year examination at Amar Singh College Srinagar. Glass pieces of smashed windowpanes of the ill-fated bus had hit her, causing multiple wounds on her face and head. A lady doctor who hugged Shazia was trying to console her as she kept crying in pain.

"What will happen to her? Will her face regain the beauty she had? One of the attendants apprehensive of her future could be heard saying as tears rolled out of her eyes.



For Shazia's family misfortune didn't come alone. Her sister in law Rumaisa Mehraj too met a similar fate. Coincidentally the duo was traveling together and going to appear in the same examination, at the same venue when the tragedy befell them. However, Rumaisa was admitted in ward no 1 for specialized treatment. Mere glimpse of Rumaisa's face revealed her agony. The right side of her face was badly damaged by multiple splinters. Her hand was bandaged, wounds on her face swollen and clothes drenched with bloodstains.

Her relatives, especially the mother-in-law was sobbing. Rumaisa's parents are in Kolkata (Calcutta) these days" one of the attendants said adding that " they were yet to be informed of the incident". Both sisters had to drop the examination as such their year's hard work turned futile. "Our whole year's hard work has gone waste. We have lost a precious year," sobs Shazia. Education has suffered terribly in the ongoing turmoil as students in most cases either fail to reach for examination being late by daily searches or get injured in the acts of violence.

Another injured, Asma Meraj a postgraduate student of Women's college was rushed out of the ward for a CT scan. She had received severe wounds close to her right eye. Earlier, at the trauma unit of the hospital arrived Kalla looking for his wounded wife. His wife Dilshada was waiting for the bus when the blast left her in a pool of blood. Standing by the side of Dilshada's bed, Kalla recollected his woeful tale.

" I dropped my wife at bus stand and myself went to the office at MA road Srinagar. While parking the car I heard a massive blast. Turning apprehensive I called my wife on mobile but someone else picked it up. He was a Tata Sumo driver who informed him that his wife had been wounded and was being rushed to the hospital," the husband narrated.

Even though all the bereaved families were in distress the plight on one Sajad Ashraf appeared worst. His wounded wife, Rumaisa and sister, Shazia were lying on beds in two separate wards. Sajad kept shuttling between the two yards at a distance of nearly 6 yards. The violence has left many women crippled and deformed marring their psyche. In spite of all odds, women emerge stronger to move ahead and face the challenges of life.

## **MOTHER'S TEARS DRIZZLE OVER DEAD SONS FATE**

**Madiyan (LoC), November 3:** Villages have turned into graveyards, thousands have lost their lives, number of wounded is yet to be ascertained, widows and orphans are seen loitering for helping hand and other untold stories float in earthquake ravaged areas in difficult terrain. Yet this sordid story of mother is unique as even after three weeks since the quake shattered her household, she still wails for her only dead son.

Afsar Bi, 55, has been in tears after her only son Nisar Hessian perished in the house on October 8. Even after three weeks Afsar Bi is sitting with village women and wailing continuously. Sitting in a small 10X10 square feet iron shed with her five daughters, Afsar Bi tells with proud that her son was the only postgraduate in the entire area. "We had sent him first to Baramulla and then to Srinagar for higher studies" she admits.

Nisar, a teacher by profession was buried under the debris of his three-storey house on fateful day along with his six-year old son Saqib. But luckily other family members removed Saqib from the debris after one hour, unhurt.

"My husband (Master Rashid) has retired from the service and Nisar was the only hope of his five sisters, old age parents and his own family. Master now has added responsibility of his orphan grandson and widow daughter-in-law", said sobbing Afsar Bee.

The turn of events in the wake of earthquake is revealing as those enjoying life to the fullest prior to the quake now live life as their status and style has been buried in the debris.

This could be gauged from the fact that some of the goods removed from the debris of Master Rashid's house depicted how lavish life his family would have been living in this remote hamlet near LoC. When asked what she has thought about future of her widowed daughter-in-law and grandson, Afsar Bi said, almighty has played a cruel joke with my daughter-in-law. We can't force her to stay here, as she is hardly 24 years of age. It is her wish now whether she wants to remain here or go back to her parental home.

Contrary to others in earthquake-hit areas, Afsar Bi says she wants no relief and compensation. "If somebody can return my son and take the rest of our belongings, I am ready". But soon Afsar Bi laments with tears rolling on her cheeks, "I know it is not possible. There is no hope for us now except Allah".

Suddenly Afsar Bi's 85-year old mother-in-law who was asleep in the same shed woke-up. "Why did God keep me alive to see this day? It would have been better if I had died. At least my son (Master Rashid) would have been relieved of some liability", Nisar's grandmother, Begum Jee said with choking voice.

Afsar Bee's Son-in-law, Mubarak Shah who had come to console his in-laws said, I am at loss as what to do. My house has also been destroyed and my family is living in open. I am the only one in both families who can go to Kamalkot (last area upto which vehicles ply) to get some foodstuff.

## **AGITATOR'S TORCH POLICE POST AFTER WOMEN'S ARREST; SAGAR PROTESTS**

**Srinagar, November 24:** Arrest of three members of a family, including two women by Police triggered violent clashes in the heart of Srinagar on November 23 while relatives of dozens of youth, picked up from the old city, staged a sit-in outside a police station.

Hundreds of people took to streets after the police raided the house of Habibullah Malik at Maisuma locality, which houses the headquarters of pro-independence (Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front) JKLF, and arrested his son Muhammad Shafi, wife Mughli and daughter Nighat. Police said they were wanted in a case.

Chanting anti-India, anti-government and pro-freedom slogans, the agitators set ablaze a police post to register their protest, witnesses said. A large contingent of police laced with bamboo sticks and tear smoke guns reached the spot and chased away the protestors who however offered a tough resistance.

To quell the protests, police fired scores of teargas canisters. Later the protestors regrouped and pelted stones on the police for two hours, witnesses added.

Shopkeepers in Maisuma, Budshah Chowk, Red Cross Road, Exchange Road and the adjoining commercial hubs of the city closed all establishments following the clashes. Transport was also affected as the protestors blocked the road leading to Hari Singh High Street.

The family of the arrested trio who had joined the sit-in at Maisuma said, "My brother is a travel agent, sister a student of 12th class and mother a housewife.

Is it their only crime? Shouted Tahmina while beating her chest. My sister Nighat was preparing for her exams on Friday. Police has ruined her career. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Muneer Khan insisted that the trio was not arrested, but taken for some investigation.

"The fact is they were taken for some investigation in different cases and not arrested. People thought they were arrested and created trouble. They would be released after questioning", the SSP told media.

Senior National Conference leader Ali Muhammad Sagar strongly reacted to the arrests, urging the government to release the held women immediately.

## **WOMAN AND HER INFANT DAUGHTER DETAINED**

**Srinagar, November 21:** A woman and her infant daughter were detained by the police on charges of harboring a militant identified as Chief of Jaish-e-Muhammad militant outfit for North Kashmir, Sajid alias Qari Saifullah, who was killed by police in Jawahar Nagar area on November 20.

Five persons, including a woman namely Sameena wife of Nisar and her infant daughter were, detained after the operation in which two cops were also wounded.

According to police, on a tip-off that divisional commander of the outfit active in the valley for the past 12 years was hiding in a house in Jawahar Nagar locality belonging to late Qaisar Qalander. Police raided the house at 10:30 pm.

The landlord and his children were out of station and only the tenants hailing from Islamabad were present there, Muneer Khan Senior Superintendent of police (SSP) said. He said the tenants, three men, a woman along with her infant daughter came out of the house when police announced on microphone that any civilian in the house should come out.

"I personally tried a lot to persuade him (the militant) to come out, but he resorted to indiscriminate firing and hurled grenades resulting in injuries to two of my men", the SSP told media persons.

This triggered an encounter during which the militant Sajid alias Saif-ul-llah hailing from Balakote, Pakistan, was shot dead.

Police says the tenants were arrested on charges of harboring the militant since last Wednesday.

The detained tenants are Nisar Ahmed Shah son of Muhammad Yousuf Shah of Islamabad and his two brothers, Javid Ahmed and Reyaz Ahmed.

However, Sameena and her infant daughter were later released in the afternoon. Meanwhile, Sameena's family who lives in Ikhrappora locality adjacent to the encounter spot said the arrestees were innocent. Nisar along with his family and brothers had come for a party and left for his residence nearly an hour before the incident, the family said.

## **MARRIED TO COUSIN, AGENCIES FORCE WOMAN TO LEAVE VALLEY**

**Srinagar December:** A Pakistan administered Kashmir (PAK) resident, Sabeha Younis, who married her cousin of Garkot-Uri after the recent earthquake was forced by security agencies to leave Kashmir. Sabeha reached at her uncle's residence in Garkot along with her parents, two sisters and a brother after traveling in Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service on September 22.

The earthquake of October 8 collapsed Sabeha's house in Chattarabad-Muzaffarabad as well as his uncle's in Uri where the family was residing at that time. Sabeha married her cousin Ishtiyaq Ahmad on October 30. The marriage ceremony took place in a makeshift tent in Uri. On November 2, Sabeha's parents left for their home through Wagah border in Punjab and later went to Saudi Arabia for work. Homeless, the bride, her sisters and brother decided to stay back in Garkot.

However police and security forces have been pressurizing Sabeha to leave Uri and return to PAK. "I don't want to go back. My husband is here. Why should I leave him? Where will we go in PAK as our parents are in Saudi Arabia" weeps Sabeha.

While leaving, Sabeha and her siblings were in tears. "We have been informed that our house has collapsed in PAK and our parents are abroad. Where will we go now", Sabeha moans. The four boarded a bus along with 16 Uri residents, meeting their relatives in PAK after the earthquake, in Uri and taken to Kaman Post, where they were made to cross the LoC. A bus was run from here on Thursday to Kaman Post for the Muzaffarabad bound passengers. But no passenger boarded the vehicle here and all the 20 passengers got into it at Uri. This was for the first time since the earthquake that a bus was operated from Srinagar to Kaman Post.

The civil and police authorities, however, clarified that it was not the resumption of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. "Had it been the resumption of the bus service then the five passengers of the state who were stranded in POK after the earthquake were to be brought in government buses from Muzaffarabad to Kaman Post. But this did not happen, the stranded passengers had to themselves arrange vehicles to reach Chakoti from Muzaffarabad. At Chakoti, the Pakistani officials brought them near Kaman Bridge, where they crossed over. Among the passengers one belonged to Uri and four to Poonch", said a government official.

## **COURT SUMMONS NCV MLA AFTER CHARGES OF MOLESTATION**

**SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 5:** A city magistrate has asked MLA Kupwara, Mir Saifullah to be present in the court on December 22 in a case of alleged molestation and exploitation of girls. According to a local news agency, the chairperson of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) namely Habba Khatoon Foundation Kashmir, Waheeda Shah had filed an application in the office of Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM), Srinagar alleging that Mir Saifullah used to lure girls by saying that he would give them the jobs and then dishonored them.

The CJM referred the case to city magistrate who has ordered the MLA to be present in the court on December 22.

The chairperson of NGO, Waheeda Shah had in the application claimed that the MLA Kupwara used to call girls at his official residence promising them that they would be given jobs and this process had started years back. It has also been alleged that Mir used to molest and dishonor girls once they visited the official residence of MLA Kupwara.

The chairperson had in the application said that some of the girls who had been dishonored by the MLA contacted the NGO and presented the whole state of affairs. She has written in the application that she many a times asked Mir Saifullah to desist from such an action, however he did not relent. In the application the chairperson has written that she along with a group of the "dishonoured" girls visited the concerned legislator at his official residence at Jawahar Nagar on November 19, 2005. In the application, Shah said that the MLA Kupwara warned her of dire consequences and also tried to molest her on which she cried for help. She added that the girls who were sitting in another room broke the door of the room where she was sitting with the legislator.

The chairperson in the application has written that she informed the Police Station Rajbagh about the whole incident, but the police personnel did not take any action. She added that the general secretary of National Conference Women's Wing was also informed about the whole episode, but still there was no action against the concerned MLA.

The city magistrate, Jaffar Hussain Beigh noted down the statement of Shah in which she said that MLA Kupwara warned her of dire consequences, if the same came to be known to the public. The chairperson of the NGO appealed the court to take action against the concerned legislator. Following this the judge has asked the MLA Kupwara to present in court on December 22 and a case under sections 511, 509, 376 and 506-RPC has been filed against him. Mir, however, strongly denied Waheeda's allegations. He contacted news agency and alleged that Waheeda was pressuring him to marry her. " Since I did not succumb to her pressure, she cooked up these baseless stories", he said.

## **SEEKING SUCCOUR; FORGOTTEN VICTIMS OF DODA LANDSLIDES**

**Doda, December 6:** Zaitoona is a widow who resides in a cow shed with her three daughters. Starved and shattered, she still lives with hope that the district administration would help construct her house and compensate for her land, destroyed due to landslides last winter.

Although former Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed during his visit to village Tanta, Doda had assured relief and rehabilitation for Zaitoona and her family but the assurances have yet to see the light of the day even as the winter chill is back.

This not the only family waiting for compensation from the state government, many like Zaitoona are either living under extreme weather conditions or have withdrawn their children from schools thus shifting their base to states like Punjab or Uttar Pradesh.

After the landslides, Mufti during his tenure had directed District Development Commissioner to survey the affected areas and prepare a detailed report of losses incurred due to the natural calamity so that they could be rehabilitated or compensated.

Although the authorities did prepare the report as directed and submitted it to the government, however despite the effort, relief did not reach the affected. With the result, most of the families are compelled to bear the winter chill.

Shada, resident of Doda revealed that he along with many was awaiting relief but when it did not reach them despite assurance they had no other option but to shift. Wani who has withdrawn his children from school claims that he would migrate to Punjab and look for jobs to support his family.

However, most people in Wani's village do not even have the means to move out as a result they are compelled to live in present conditions. Gulzar Ahmed Qureshi, DDC Doda when contacted revealed that despite repeated reminders to the government to release the funds the amount has not been released. He maintained that although the office did receive an installment of Rs. 60 lakhs but the amount was distributed between families who had lost their bread earners.

## **TRAGIC NEWS ARRIVES BUT ITS DEATH CERTIFICATE THIS WIDOW AWAITS**

**Sultan Dhaki, December 11:** Mohammad Sharif Mir of Sultan Dhaki had succeeded to board the Srinagar-Muzafarabad bus after a long and hectic efforts sometime in September but soon after reaching his relatives across the border, fate had something different to offer for him. He died under the debris of his relative's house which was razed by October 8 massive earthquake.

Sharif left behind his wife Saleema Begum and seven children, who are battling for their survival in an atmosphere of survival of the fittest. Saleema has received a relief cheque for her destroyed house but she is still moving from pillar to post to get some compensation for her deceased husband. "Authorities are demanding the death certificate of my husband. Please tell me where from I can get that certificate. He died in Muzaffarabad and I think we had survived only to fight for seeking justice," says Saleema. Saleema's seven children are now living without any proper accommodation and food. They have made up a tent of torn polythene and are bearing the brunt of winter chill of Uri, a border township. Shabir Ahmad Mir the eldest son of Saleema is studying in 10th standard. He has left all hopes for a bright future and a prosperous life. He says that October 8 has created a big void in his life. "On that day I lost everything. And above all, this killer quake snatched my beloved father from me," laments Shabir with tears rolling on his face. Shabir is now trying to recover from trauma, which he faced because of the recent killer quake. "I know that government can not help us fully in our rehabilitation so I am trying to prepare myself to shoulder the responsibilities of my large family," declared Shabir.

Saleema was one among the widows who had assembled in Sultan Dhaki with all their hopes pinned on UPA chairperson and Congress president Sonia Gandhi who visited the village on December 9 to show solidarity with the quake hit people there. "I thought she would redress my grievances but she had no time. Now I do not think anybody else can solve my problem," observed Saleema.

The other widows who were scattered here and there after the exit of Ms. Gandhi were of the opinion that Saleema should be given priority for the compensation, which is being offered by the government for earthquake victims.

"Government should consider Saleema's case on priority basis. She has only received some relief amount for her damaged house but is deprived of the compensation for her deceased husband," says Mali Jan, widow of Jalil Mir who had died due to the recent killer quake.

Saleema is of the opinion that if she is given some compensation for her deceased husband she can utilize that for food and shelter of her small children. "They (government officials) should ask anybody here; even our *Sarpanch* can give an affidavit for the fact that my husband had gone to Muzafarabad and he died there in the October 8 earth quake," Saleema appealed Shabir is full of hope that the government would do justice in his case. "I hope that relief commissioner will give us relief cheque for my deceased father so that we can manage our daily life," remarked Shabir.

When contacted, relief commissioner Bashir Ahmad Runiyal said, "They have never approached me. Once they approach me, we will ask the authorities across the border for the death certificate of Mohammad Sharif so that Saleema Begum can get compensation for her deceased husband."

## PAK WOMAN FLEES HOME TO LAND IN SRINAGAR JAIL

**SRINAGAR, December 13:** Hardly a year after her marriage, with no child, Kapoor Jan, 40, a resident of Lala Kaban (PAK) had fled her home, and crossed LOC. She left her home with the hope that she will be safe in this part of Kashmir. Languishing in Central jail Srinagar, December 12 she got a sentence for her illegal border crossing.

Border security forces had arrested Kapoor on August 9, 2005 in Lal Pul sector of Uri. BSF later handed over her to local police. Police later presented a challan against her before Sub Judicial Magistrate of Uri. After hearing the case the court ordered a sentence of six months imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 200 on her. Interestingly Kapoor's release if it materializes would be on republic day January 26, 2006.

While in police station Uri, Kapoor Jan told media persons that two months back she was beaten to pulp by her six step daughters, on the pretext that she has sold a sheep to Border Security Forces (BSF), posted near their village Balianwali Dhok, in Pakistan administered Kashmir (PAK).

Her husband, Yaqoob Mir, when came to know about the situation, threatened her of dire consequences. She had left her home in the darkness of midnight on July 26, 2005 and reached near the border where she felt asleep. Because of profuse bleeding, she felt unconscious. She slept for some hours in a dense grass field and then started moving towards this side of LoC. Sensing some movement; near their post BSF men resorted to heavy firing.

After the firing was over, she again started moving forward to BSF post of 109 BN. BSF men after noticing her had signaled her to come nearer. She ran towards the post and the security personnel enquired about the incident. "I narrated the whole story to them and they offered me tea and some tablets and later handed over me to the police station Uri", Kapoor added.

Two months earlier when contacted the SDPO Uri, Mohammed Yousuf said, "She had crossed through Sindgund FDL, Charan PP area of tehsil Uri on July 27, 2005 and police had produced the challan on August 09, 2005 before the sub judicial magistrate Uri. The case was registered under Egress and Internal Movement Control Ordinance (E & IMCO)".

Kapoor had only one grievance in jail. "I was a chain smoker in PoK but police here does not provide any cigarettes or any chewing tobacco. In Uri they would provide me every thing. I am suffering from a severe headache here but they are giving me medicine for it. What I need is Bidi or tobacco", demanded Kapoor. When asked had she sold any sheep to BSF personnel she replied, "No there was nothing like that. My stepdaughters lied to my husband and then beat me up to the pulp. There was no alternative except leaving the house, else, they would have killed me. I ran and did not know where to go. I suffered severe injuries and my senses were not working which resulted to my border crossing". Showing the fractured arm and leg she wept and appealed the government to give her a push back so that she could meet her parents. Kapoor said, "I do not want to visit my husbands home else I want to live with my parents so that I can spent my days of life peacefully".

When contacted, president of bar council J&K High court Mian Abdul Qayoom said, "If this is an innocent crossing she can not be booked under public safety act (PSA). There are some laws for that. Six months imprisonment is the sentence for such case but if government wish, she can be pushed back before serving that sentence as power of remission lies in the hands of government".

Former minister of state for home affairs Abdul Rehman Veeri had said about Kapoor, "There are many ifs and buts, we will look into the matter and accordingly, take some action. I have taken note of the case and let us hope for some breakthrough with respect to such cases".

Mehbooba Mufti president peoples democratic party (PDP) had this to say about Kapoor's case, "Government can not push back as such but we will communicate to the authorities in Pakistan administered Kashmir and let us hope for some positive development in this case. We are currently pursuing a case of Feroz Goonga who is deaf and dumb and things are moving in positive direction"

## **AGAINST JOSTLING MEN, WOMEN TAKE A BEATING OF RELIEF**

**URI, December 4:** Every day they assemble outside the relief centres to get their due share and return empty handed. Reason is too obvious. They cannot compete the jostling men in the fray. No wonder, these hapless women, mostly the widows, accompanying their children remain as mute spectators while the men get hold of everything that comes their way right from tents, blankets to even essential items like rice and wheat. Right from the day one since ravaging temblor of October 8 devastated this township, this distressed lot of women and children is at the receiving end, as for them, very little 'relief' has trickled so far. "Please take our word to the higher ups and tell them to make the necessary arrangements if they want us to live. Otherwise, the day is not far off when most of us would die due to harsh winter conditions. Only then the government would come to know about the plight of the distressed lot like us", said a group of widows. Most of the widows have three to four children and they are moving here and there to collect the relief. These hapless fellows are without the houses and right now they are passing their life in the tents. As the harsh winter has already set in these people are going to face a tough time, in case the government does not provide the necessary shelter.

"My husband is in jail for the last three years and have to look after my kids. Somehow, I managed to run the daily chores of life but the quake shattered me, our life totally. We have no house to live in and there is nobody, who would come up and provide relief to us" said Reshma while huddling her kids together. Women like Reshma could be seen making rounds of various offices so as to receive the relief and settle their compensation claims, but as they cannot shout or jostle the men, most of the times this group of people has to eat a humble pie. They get dejected and have to return to the tents empty-handed. Widows, who have lost everything in this quake, have turned into strangers in their own land and there is nobody who would come up and take forward their genuine concerns. At the same time they are not disappointed over the role of their friends, relatives or for that matter their neighbors saying that the magnitude of tragedy is great and everybody is concerned about his or her own well being.

"We cannot blame anybody for our plight as the quake devastated each and every one. It is quite natural in such a situation that one is concerned about one's well being without caring for others. But it was up to the government to see what is the condition of women like us and take the corrective measures, but sadly that has not happened so far", said Amina Begum, a resident of Shalla Dajan-Nowshera.

Most of these widows are young and at times are scared to pass their life in the tents feeling that there is no security available to them. Some of them are of the opinion that it would have been better if some sheds were constructed where only the widows would be allowed to reside.

"This is somewhat unexpected which has happened in our life. We have lost the emotional security attached with our husbands and that sense of insecurity is haunting us like anything. I think the people at the helm of affairs are aware about the same, but sadly so far no step has been taken which would give a sense of security or belongingness to us", said Sara, a widow.

The relief distributed among this distressed lot also speaks volumes about the treatment, which has been meted out to them at this hour of grave tragedy. The blankets, which were expected to give some sort of relief to the affected people, are very less in dimension and they cannot accommodate a single person. "This is the relief which we have got from the government and you can easily judge the extent of treatment given to us", said Sarwa Begum while showing the small blanket with holes in the center given to her as relief material. She added that this blanket would not be able to cover a person and how can it be expected that the same would cater to the whole family.

## IN BRIEF

### ➤ TROOPS MOLESTED OUR WOMEN: BANDIPORA FAMILY

**Bandipora, December 8:** Soldiers of Rashtriya Rifles allegedly tried to molest some women during a raid at Irain village here on 6 December night. The incident occurred when troops of 14 RR stationed at Bandipora barged into the house of a retired teacher, Muhammad Kamal and allegedly ransacked the belongings.

The women present in the house however raised an alarm forcing the troops to escape from the spot.

Deputy Commanding Officer of the RR Camp, DS Mundi refuted the allegations. "The family provides food and shelter to the militants. Our troops only searched the house and didn't molest the women," he told media.

An official of Bandipora Police Station said, "We don't have any information regarding the molestation attempt. Kamal's son Javeed Ahmed has been arrested in the killing of an Army Major last month."

However, the residents of Irain said Javeed and his family have no links with the militants

### ➤ 3 SCHOOL STUDENTS MISSING IN KISHIWAR

**Jammu October 3:** Three students of government higher secondary school among 8 went missing since past 20 days.

Police said three students of Marwah School went missing from their school since September 17, 2005.

They are identified as Khurshed Ahmed 17 son of Ghulam Ahmed Malik, Sajad Iqbal, 18, son of Ghulam Rasool and Zahoor Ahmed son of Ghulam Ahmed Ranoo all residents of Marwah.

Another 9-class student went missing from Lodkha Nowshera since September 15, 2005. He has been identified as Rakesh Kumar of Lodkha Nowshera

A woman identified as Beena Begum wife of Nazir Ahmed of Gurah Kalyal (Billawer) went missing along her daughter Babua since September 30, 2005.

### ➤ WOMAN, 2 DAUGHTER MISSING FROM PALOURA

**October 5:** A housewife went missing along with her two minor daughters from Paloura since 25<sup>th</sup> September 2005.

Police report said that a young housewife Ritu Khour wife of Narinder Singh, resident of Dhok Paloura along with her two daughters Gudia 11 and Sonia 6 went missing from their residence since September 25, 2005.

Police said that all of them left their house in the morning and did not return. A missing report has been lodged in the concerned police station.

### ➤ BEG URGES PROBE INTO RAPE AT KOKERNAG

**November 9:** The provincial president of National Conference (NC), Dr Method Beg has appealed the Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad to order a probe into the alleged gang rape and killing of a young woman by the security forces at Kokernag in Anantnag.

In a statement, Dr. Beg said that the woman was gang raped by the men in uniform and later they killed her. He added that the new Chief Minister has already made it clear that he would not tolerate human rights abuses and taking action in this regard would ensure the same.

The provincial president of NC stated that the same incident is a test of character for Azad and he should order an immediate probe into this heinous crime. He added that carrying out a gang rape is a shameful act and it is more heinous that killing a person in custody and therefore stern action should be taken against the erring security forces personnel.

### ➤ WOMEN COUNCILORS BEATEN

**Srinagar October 4:** Two women Councilors of Municipal Committee Uri were allegedly beaten by their male colleagues during the meeting of the Municipality, reports said.

### ➤ ISLAMABAD WOMAN BOOKED UNDER PSA

**Srinagar:** A woman, Maroofa Akhter wife of Fayaz Ahmed Lone of Aougam Islamabad, who was taken into custody on September 4 has been booked under Public Safety Act and sent of Central Jail Jammu. Local news agency here reported that the lady was accused of being involved in militancy related activities.

### ➤ ABDUCTED WOMAN RECOVERED

**Srinagar November 17:** A mother of four children was recovered three days after she was abducted by a youth at Durbal here on November 13.

One Gulzar Ahmed Rather of Shariefabad abducted Nusrat daughter of Ghulam Ahmed Wani when she was at the marriage ceremony of her cousin. It was after a three-day hunt by her relatives that she was found on November 16 Parisabad Pora in Budgam from the house of Muhammad Jaffar. Her relatives allege that her kidnapper kept her at Bemina for two days.

### ➤ WOMAN FOUND DEAD IN CHENNAI VILLAGE

**Udhampur November 22:** Mystery shroud over the death of a woman who was found dead in pool at village Rangni under the jurisdiction of police station Chennai.

The deceased has been identified Satya Devi, wife of Girdhari Lal of Rangni. She went missing from her residence under mysterious circumstances since last 13 days.

The body after autopsy was handed over to the family members for last rites.

Police is investigating the reason behind her death.

### ➤ WOMAN'S BODY RECOVERED IN DODA

**Jammu November 15:** Under mysterious circumstances police last evening recovered corpse of a young woman from Nangwari Nallah near Kithat under the jurisdiction of Gandoh police station in Doda District.

The deceased has been identified as Saira Begum 22 wife of Talab Hussein, resident of Gali Bhatoli village in Gandoh.

Report said, last evening some passers by noticed corpse of a woman in Nangwari nallah in Kithat in Gondah, adding they immediately informed the police which reached the spot and took the body in its possession.

Reports said, Gandoh police have registered a case under section 174 CrPC initiating investigation to unravel the mystery behind the death.

#### ➤ **OCCUPATION OF SCHOOL BY ARMY TRIGGERS PROTEST IN BANDIPORA**

**December 1, Bandipora:** The occupation of a school building by the troops triggered protest demonstration at Argam Bandipora on November 29. Reports said troops of 13 Rashtriya rifles (RR) occupied the building of Higher Secondary school Argam in the month of October after the troops of 14 RR left the place. After the troops refused to leave the school building, the people including the students staged a demonstration against them. Later senior police officials and civil officials visited the place and pacified the protestors. The tehsildar Bandipora assured them that the matter would be taken up with the higher authorities.

On December 2 army refuted the news as baseless. " There were no protest demonstrations at Argam by any one on November 29 or thereafter till date as claimed in the article. A meeting of the parents and elders was held on the day demanding opening of the school, which has been closed for the last three months, due to threat issued by terrorists to teachers of the school and the villagers.

" to say that the demonstrations were held against the occupation of school building by the army is not only distortion but falsification of facts. The news is clearly to distort facts of the case. Although the company post of 13 RR is co located with the school, no part of the school building of govt higher secondary school at Argam is occupied by troops" a defence spokesman said in a statement.

He said that schoolteachers and students had appreciated construction of various facilities by army such as the school canteen and toilets. The army also erected school boundary fencing and gate.

#### ➤ **WOMEN ARRESTED**

**December 1:** Troops on November 30 arrested a woman and a driver during the search of a sumo vehicle no JK01D/4047 near Pampore in South Kashmir's Pulwama district. Police claimed to recover some explosive material from the vehicle. The arrested are Shaheen Ahmed Wani son of Ghulam Rasool of Shalimar Srinagar and Rafiq Begum wife of Shabir Ahmed Khan of Chutnipora Handwara. Police has registered a case.

#### ➤ **J&K MASS MOVEMENT CHAIRPERSON ARRESTED**

**December 3:** Police on December 2 detained J&K Mass movement chairperson Fareeda Behangi along with her associates at Uri.

Behangi according to local news agency KNS had gone to the border town to distribute relief among the earthquake affected. The police stopped the vehicles carrying relief and the party workers at Uri. When the workers tried to move ahead, the police detained them along with their leader and barred them from going to the quake ravaged area.

#### ➤ **WOMEN, BOY MISSING**

**December 8:** Rayees Ahmed, 12 son of Farooq Ahmed Dar of Bemina, Srinagar presently residing at company Bagh was reported missing since December 5.

Yasabo alias Dillo 19 wife of Chirag Din of Chowki Chan Jandrore of Ramnagar was reported missing since December 1. The police have registered case and are making now efforts to trace them out, police said.

#### ➤ **STUDENT MISSING**

**December 8:** Zubair Altaf, a class 12 student from Hilalabad Qamarwari has gone missing in mysterious circumstances three days ago. Local news agency reported that Zubair left home three days ago to attend tuition but didn't return. The family of missing youth has shown concern over the disappearance of Zubair. A case has been registered in the local police station. The parents of missing youth have appealed the higher authorities to trace Zubair.

#### ➤ **ABDUCTED WOMAN FOUND DEAD**

**December 16:** Unidentified gunmen abducted Maroofa 21 daughter of Ghulam Muhammad Sheikh of Chogalpora at Damhal Hanjipora Islamabad. According to sources, locals found the body of the woman outside the village. Quoting police, Maroofa was shot at a point blank range. Police has registered a case of abduction and murder and started investigation.

#### ➤ **GIRL MISSING**

**December 5:** A young girl is missing from her house in Rajouri since September 9 2005, police said. The girl has been identified as Khatoon Begum 20 daughter Muhammad Yousuf of Rajouri. Police have registered a missing report and efforts have been initiated to trace the girl.

#### ➤ **WOMEN MISSING**

**December 15:** A woman named Usha Rani, 22, wife of Shoba Ram of Kanthal has been reported missing since December 10, police said.

#### ➤ **2 SISTERS AMONG 3 ARRESTED**

Srinagar: Troops and police detained three persons including two sisters during various raids at Kulgam and Qazigund.

According to local media agency police arrested Alif Jan and Beti daughters of Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Rather of Zaslur Kulgam. Police is interrogating the duo, the news agency said.



➤ **PAK WOMAN DETAINED ON LOC**

Srinagar: Troops arrested a Pakistani o Line of Control (LoC) in North Kashmir’s Kupwara district.

Soldiers of 2 Dogra regiment arrested a Pakistani woman Sakina Begum when she was crossing the LoC at Sidhar Karnah.

Sakina’s relatives in Pakistan were killed in the devastating earthquake of October 8. She crossed LoC to live one of her relatives at Karnah but was arrested.

➤ **PAK WOMAN SENT BACK**

Srinagar, Dec 26: A Pakistani woman was handed over to Pakistan army near the Line of Control (LoC) in north Kashmir last evening, a defense ministry spokesman said here today.

He said a woman, Sakeena Bano wife of a serving Pakistani soldier Shafiq, inadvertently crossed over to this side at village Sunpura in Karnah sector on December 21.

She was immediately handed over to local police, he said.

A request was received from the Pakistani army near Sudpura post that Sakeena had crossed over to Indian side without knowing the topography of the area.

The Indian army authorities, as a goodwill gesture and considering the aspect of likely long delay due to the official formalities for her repatriation, finally made an exception on humanitarian ground and decided to send her back to PaK, the spokesman said.

The woman was received by her husband in the presence of Pakistan army officers and numberdars of PaK village.

**WOMEN – CHILDREN KILLED – INJURED**

DATE	INCIDENT
<b>October 1</b>	Unidentified gunmen shot dead a girl Shagufta Akhtar of Samboora Pulwama.
<b>October 1</b>	Three women identified as Rehmati, Raja and Kulsooma were injured in an encounter at Kral Muhalla Kokernag.
<b>October 6</b>	Nineteen persons were injured when a grenade lobbed by unidentified person near the Bus Stand Islamabad on October 5 evening exploded. Among the wounded is Hajira wife of Muhammad Shafi of K P Road and Yasmeena daughter of Hamidullah of Hassanpora Arwani. They have been referred to Srinagar hospital
<b>October 6</b>	Unidentified gunmen barged into the residence of Qatil Gami and fired indiscriminately on the inmates killing him, his daughter Parveena Akhter (16) and his son Fakir Ahmad Gujjar (19) at Gambir Gool Udampur on October 4.
<b>October 6</b>	Unidentified gunmen, according to a police communiqué, barged into the residence of Zar Gul son of Ghulam Nabi Magray at Suranda Udampur on October night and fired indiscriminately on the inmates wounding his wife Rafiq Begum. The injured has been hospitalized.
<b>October 6</b>	Gunmen killed a girl in South Kashmir’s Pulwama district. Gunmen fired upon Shagufta Akhtar daughter of Muhammad Shaban at her residence near Samboora. She died on the spot.
<b>October 8</b>	A five year old was wounded when discarded item he was playing with exploded at Arabal in Dooru.
<b>October 16</b>	A HM ultra shot at and injured mother-in-law of a surrendered ultra in Basti village, nine Kms from Bhaderwah in Doda district. Reports said, ultras shot at and wounded Zaitoon Begum wife of Sakhi Muhammad of Basti in Bhaderwah tehsil of Doda district on October 16 afternoon. Reports further said, the woman had taken her cattle to a Dhok (Grazing pasture) near Basti when suddenly a HM ultra descended there and asked her that HM divisional commander wants to see her. The woman refused to oblige, which infuriated the ultras that fired two shots at the woman that pierced her leg and waist. Her cousin who incidentally went to the Dhok later rushed the woman to the sub-district hospital Bhaderwah
<b>October 19</b>	A woman identified as Rehti wife of Ghulam Qadir Teli, resident of Kadlabal Pampore was killed in crossfire between militants and army at the same place on October 19. While two woman identified as Amelia wife of Nazir Ahmed and resident of Jammu and her daughter Dilshada were injured in the incident.
<b>October 27</b>	36 persons including 26 security personnel and 10 civilians were injured in a car bomb explosion near Muzaffarbad-HMT on Srinagar Baramulla national highway in the outskirts of Srinagar city. Among the ten civilians, three women injured have been identified as Parveena Akhtar, Bilquees Akhtar and Naseema Akhtar. All the civilians have been hospitalized and their condition is said to be stable.
<b>November 3</b>	In a car bomb blast at Nowgam in the outskirts on the Srinagar Jammu National highway Saleema Akhter, wife of Dr. Ghulam Rasool resident of Gulshan Nagar succumbed to her injuries. The identity of another woman killed in the blast was yet to be ascertained as the body was mutilated beyond recognition due to the impact of the blast. Among the injured were Hameeda Akhter and her mother Afroza resident of Gulshan Nagar.
<b>November</b>	RR personnel beat up an imam Manzoo Ahmed Sada along with his mother Saja Begum and sister at Sadi

<b>10</b>	Muhalla Pattan in Baramulla district. Saja received grave injuries in her head and was admitted to Shere Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Soura. Her condition is stated to be critical.
<b>November 12</b>	An elderly woman died on the spot while her two grand sons were wounded in a mysterious blast at their residence in Khour area of Akhnoor. Their house collapsed due to the explosion and the victims were buried under the rubble. The explosion took place at 0410 hours this morning. The deceased has been identified as Parmo Devi wife of Babu Ram, resident of Khour. Her grandsons were identified as Sikander Singh 14, alias Rinku and Sikander Singh 8 both sons of Jagtar Singh residents of Khour.
<b>November 15</b>	Unidentified gunmen shot and injured Haseena Akhter 22 daughter of Ali Muhammad of Gulbagh (Ratnipora) Pulwama on Sunday evening. Haseena succumbed to her injuries in hospital, police said, she was working as SPO in police station Pampore two years back.
<b>November 16</b>	Rahti wife of Khaliq Bhat, Zaina wife of Ganai Parray, Mrs. Ghulam Muhammad Dar of Tantraypora, Mrs. Ghulam Muhammad Dar were injured in a militant attack on Former minister and senior leader of democratic party Ghulam Hassan Mir at Tangmarg
<b>November 16</b>	In the Tangmarg blast explosion that occurred after the former housing and urban development minister and senior Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader finished his speech at a rally at Tangmarg Park a 12-year-old student Showkat Ahmad War son of Muhammad Yousuf War of Patipora was killed among six others.
<b>November 21</b>	Unidentified gunmen Sunday evening lobbed a grenade on a woman, Toffy of Srinagar at New Colony Sopore, which after exploding wounded her. She has been hospitalized.
<b>November 24</b>	Afroza wife of Habibullah of Hazratbal was injured when Fidayeen stormed the <i>de-funct</i> cinema in downtown Hawal Srinagar housing Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel killed three soldiers two militants besides injuring six.
<b>November 25</b>	Unidentified gunmen hurled a grenade into the house of Abdul Hameed son of Talib Hussein of Phagla sector Surankote that killed his three-year-old daughter and injured two other daughters. The wounded have been hospitalized.
<b>November 26</b>	A girl who was injured in the grenade blast in the house of Abdul Hamid at Surankote in Poonch on 24 <sup>th</sup> November succumbed to her injuries.
<b>December 4</b>	Unidentified gunmen fired upon Rafiq wife of Bango khan at Bandipora in Baramulla district on December 3. She died on the spot. Police has registered a case and started investigation
<b>December 4</b>	Suspected militants barged into the residence of Ruqaya Akhter and shot her dead at Choontimullah Bandipora in Baramulla district.
<b>December 5</b>	A 16-year-old girl identified as Shahzada Akhter was injured in an encounter between the militants and the security forces of IRR at Hamshipora Kulgam.
<b>December 5</b>	A woman, Jabeena daughter of Ghulam Ahmed of Machar Kulgam was injured in an encounter between militants and soldiers in the Islamabad village.
<b>December 9</b>	An 8-year-old boy was critically wounded when an explosive device allegedly planted by troops went off at Keran in Kupwara district on December 8.
<b>December 15</b>	Unidentified gunmen barged into the residence of Muhammad Iqbal of Tanta (Gondoh) Doda and shot dead his son Liaqat Ali, a class 8 <sup>th</sup> student on December 13
<b>December 16</b>	A woman identified as Sabreena Akhter wife of Muhammad Rafiq Najar sustained bullet injuries when unidentified gunmen started firing on a released militant who was talking to a group of people.
<b>December 27</b>	A 13-year-old Zameer Ahmad Wagay son of Muhammad Hussein was injured in an explosion while he was playing at N agbal Diyalgam Shopian.

DATE	WOMEN KILLED	WOMEN INJURED	CHILDREN KILLED
October 1	1	3	
October 6	2	3	
October 8			<u>11</u>
October 16		1	
October 19	1	2	
October 27	2	2	
November 10		2	
November 12	1		
November 15	2		

November 16			1K
November 21		1	
November 22	1		
November 24		1	
November 25			1K, 2 I
November 26	1		
December 4	1		
December 5		1	
December 9			II
December 15			1K
December 16	1	1	
December 27			II
<b>Total</b>	14	17	3K, 5I

## 'WE' MAKE DIFFERENCE

ONE SONG CAN SPARK A MOMENT.

ONE SONG CAN SHOW THE CARE.

ONE SONG CAN FRAME THE GOAL.

ONE SONG CAN LIFT A SOUL.

ONE SONG CAN RAISE THE SPIRIT.

ONE CANDLE CAN WIPE OUT DARKNESS.

ONE LAUGH CAN CONQUER THE GLOOM.

ONE SMILE CAN BEGIN THE FRIENDSHIP.

ONE VOICE CAN SPEAK WITH WISDOM.

ONE HEART CAN KNOW WHAT IS TRUE.

ONE KINDNESS CAN HEAL THE WOUND.

ONE LIFE CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.

**IT IS ALL UPTO US...**

## **Kashmiri Women's Initiative for Peace and Disarmament**

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