NWSA Statement on Kashmir

October 17, 2019

The Executive Committee of the National Women’s Studies Association is alarmed about the Indian government’s recent actions in Jammu and Kashmir, which have resulted in a series of human rights abuses and intensified repression in the world’s most militarized zone. Since early August, the Indian government has sent 35,000 troops to the region, in addition to the 700,000 already there, in violation of international law and Indian constitutional guarantees that maintained Kashmir’s semi-autonomous status. The United Nations considers Kashmir an internationally disputed territory, whose political future should be decided by a plebiscite. Prior to August 5, Kashmir was guaranteed “special” status in the Indian constitution. Although Indian control of Kashmir over the past 70 years has slowly eroded Kashmir’s autonomy, the recent turn of events has resulted in an illegal annexation of Kashmir.

The Indian government’s unilateral action has justified its occupation as a strategy of ‘development’ in Kashmir. In reality, this military action and the reading down of Article 370 which gave the state of Jammu and Kashmir special status in the Indian constitution, and 35 A, which gave Kashmir the right to define a “permanent resident” of the state, is widely understood as a maneuver to “Hinduize” a Muslim-majority Kashmir and facilitate Indian purchase of Kashmiri land, resettlement by Indian nationals, and renewed tourism, setting into motion a settler colonial project.

India’s occupation of Kashmir has had a devastating impact on the 8 million Kashmiri people, disproportionately affecting Kashmiri women, who have been subject to rape and sexual violence at the hands of the Indian army, and many of whom have courageously brought such violence to light in the face of the Indian will to amnesia. The recent intensification of repression has turned Kashmir into an open-air prison. People are being detained, tortured, or disappeared. Schools and shops have closed. Public transportation has stopped running. People are dying from lack of access to healthcare and medicine, and a curfew has curtailed both livelihoods and necessary daily economic transactions. Thirteen thousand boys have been reportedly detained in service of India’s demographic warfare that will torture and kill Kashmiri Muslims. The lockdown includes a communication blackout with blocked internet access, limiting Kashmiri access to the outside world, and muzzling Kashmiri journalists who have sought to expose Indian atrocities in Kashmir. The control of the flow of information allows the Indian government to claim ‘normalcy’ in the face of horrific human rights abuses.

As an academic association committed to feminism, social justice, and self-determination for all people, we have an obligation to speak out. NWSA stands with Kashmir and Kashmiris in their quest for azaadi (freedom) and self-determination.

Given the censorship, the work of Kashmiri diaspora scholars and activists are more important than ever. Below are links for resources and information, including a syllabus produced by the Critical Kashmir Studies group.

www.nwsa.org
Stand With Kashmir
The Kashmir Syllabus
Experts on Kashmir
"All-Woman Team Releases Fact-finding Report on Kashmir"

SIGNED by the Executive Committee (EC) with affiliations*

Premilla Nadasen, President, Barnard College
Barbara Ransby, Past President, University of Illinois at Chicago
Diane Harriford, Vice President, Vassar College
Patti Duncan, Secretary, Oregon State University
Karma Chávez, Treasurer, The University of Texas at Austin

(*affiliations for identification purposes only)