

## **Input for report on violence and the right to food**

### **Title: Food System Change under Protracted Conflict in Indian administered Kashmir**

The document provides evidence on the impact of a three decade long militarized violence in Indian Administered Kashmir.<sup>1</sup> The evidence is based on ongoing collaborative work conducted by a team of researchers based at The Royal Veterinary College, University of Bristol, International Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) at the Hague and researchers in Kashmir.

### **Campaign and laws that perpetrate food systems violence in Kashmir**

*“Every issue, every conflict has only one solution – development, development and only development. We all should spend our energy on the development of the state”<sup>2</sup>*

The above remark was made by India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of a controversial infrastructural project in Indian-controlled Kashmir. Under the guise of economic development, India has for decades solidified its militaristic control of this disputed region. The Indian state has used the public campaign of economic development to entrench itself through its policies in the restive Himalayan territory, and most notably on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, when it re-annexed the region by repealing Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which granted a semi-autonomous status to the region.<sup>3</sup>

The abrogation of region’s autonomy and implementation of new laws that allows outside private companies to acquire large scale land for development projects. Over the past three years, large tracts of state and forest land have been transferred to development projects.<sup>4</sup> However, Kashmiri scholars have evidenced that Indian economic development policies have a history of de-developing the region.<sup>5</sup> This discourse based on the notion of ‘Economic Peace’ has been used to

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<sup>1</sup> Henceforth, Kashmir

<sup>2</sup> “Development solution to every issue: PM Modi to Kashmiri Youth” (Indian Express, 20th May, 2018). Accessed at <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2018/may/20/development-solution-to-every-issue-pm-modi-to-kashmiri-youth-1816976.html>

<sup>3</sup> “India revokes disputed Kashmir’s special status with rush decree” (Aljazeera, 5 August 2019). Accessed at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/5/india-revokes-disputed-kashmir-special-status-with-rush-decree>

<sup>4</sup> Athar Parvaiz “Forest Land Identified for Development After Reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir” ((January 8, 2020)). Accessed at <https://thewire.in/government/forest-land-jammu-and-kashmir>

<sup>5</sup> Zia, A. The Haunting Specter of Hindu Ethnonationalist-Neocolonial Development in the Indian Occupied Kashmir. *Development* 63, 60–66 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41301-020-00234-4>; Tak, M “The Economic Mal-Development of Jammu and Kashmir: Uncovering the Myth of Lagging Behind” forthcoming in *Palgrave Handbook of New Directions in Kashmir Studies*

promise economic growth and employment, and thus legitimize large scale land dispossession and disenfranchisement of Kashmiris.

### **Apples Value Chain**

The apple value chain provides livelihood for around 60-70 per cent of the population of Kashmir.<sup>6</sup> The sector has been disrupted by the Indian state through following mechanisms:

1) Highway Closure – Since 2019, Indian government has deliberately been halting apple trucks on the only highway that connects Kashmir to India.<sup>7</sup> These barriers to outside markets have persisted and have forced the smallholder apple farmers to sell their produce at below market rate.<sup>8</sup> As access to markets is denied it violates the right to livelihood. The value chain has also been adversely affected by India's trade policies of dumping Iranian apples in the market through Afghanistan and Dubai.<sup>9</sup> The blockade at highway and influx of non-taxed apples acts as an economic warfare against Kashmiris - crippling the local value chain on which about 2/3rds of the population relies on.

2) Restricting access to grazing land and pastures – Violation of right to livelihood and food include forced evictions and restriction of pastoralists to grazing land and pastures in the name of forest conservation.<sup>10</sup> However, according to news reports more than 10,000 apple trees belonging

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<sup>6</sup> “Kashmir’s Apple Industry On Brink Of Collapse” (September 26, 2022). Accessed at <https://newindian.in/kashmir-apple-industry-on-verge-of-collapse/>

<sup>7</sup> Greater Kashmir, “Halting fruit trucks on highway | Transporters stage protest at Shopian fruit mandi” (25 Sep, 2022). Accessed at <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/todays-paper/front-page/halting-fruit-trucks-on-highway-transporters-stage-protest-at-shopian-fruit-mandi>

<sup>8</sup> Ziraat Times “As losses and debts mount, Kashmir’s apple farmers close Mandis, explore other options” (Sept 25, 2022). Accessed at <https://ziraattimes.com/2022/09/as-losses-and-debts-mount-kashmir-apple-farmers-close-mandis-explore-other-options/>

<sup>9</sup> The Wire “Kashmir Apple Industry Incurs Heavy Losses Due to Flood of 'Illegal' Iranian Imports” (January 10, 2022). Accessed at <https://thewire.in/agriculture/kashmir-apple-industry-incurs-heavy-losses-due-to-flood-of-illegal-iranian-imports>

<sup>10</sup> “J&K Administration Demolishes Homes of over 70 Gujjar, Bakerwal Families in Pahalgam” (August 30, 2021) Accessed at <https://www.landconflictwatch.org/conflicts/j-k-administration-demolishes-homes-of-over-70-gujjar-bakerwal-families-in-pahalgam>; “J&K Forest Department Serves Eviction Notice to 98 Gujjar Families in Kupwara” (April 22, 2021). Accessed at <https://www.landconflictwatch.org/conflicts/j-k-forest-department-serves-eviction-notice-to-98-gujjar-families-in-kupwara>; “Gujjar Families Clash with Forest Officials during Eviction Drive in Kashmir's Shopian” (March 13, 2022). Accessed at <https://www.landconflictwatch.org/conflicts/gujjar-families-clash-with-forest-officials-during-eviction-drive-in-kashmir-s-shopian>

to Gujjar tribal community in Budgam district were chopped down by state authorities with the help of security forces.<sup>11</sup>

3) Introduction of new high-density technology creating at least three negative externalities. First, a shift from food production – paddy – to horticulture, in particular apples have been documented during our fieldwork. Marginalized small-scale farmers in Kashmir through the preservation of ancestral knowledge takes significant steps towards breaking down the food dependency forced by the state. However, they are facing multifaceted challenges including easy access to non-indigenous subsidized Indian rice, intensive state-backed promotion of cash crops – without input subsidies that are creating negative environmental externalities such as deglaciation. This strategy of shifting towards production for export increases food reliance on Indian subsidized food grains.

Second, farming of high-density apples is capital and labour intensive, unlike the crossbreed varieties. Smallholders thus face income depletion by moving to high investment and high-yielding commercialized and intensive farming mechanisms that push smallholders out of the value chain.

Third, the push towards high-density root stalk is having ecological impact due to intensification including biodiversity loss of indigenous breeds. Our fieldwork suggests that farmers uprooted their 20-40 year-old traditional apple trees and replacing them with high-yielding European varieties of apple.

**Resilience in the food system:** The Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers cum Dealers Union (KVFAGDU) representing apple farmers and traders has played an important role in promoting the rights of marginalized small-scale farmers. During highway closures the union campaigned to unblock the highways by submitting memorandums to government officials and protest in the form of closure of fruit mandis. To some extent they have been successful in pressurizing the government to allow free movement of apple trucks.<sup>12</sup> However, such efforts have been limited as

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<sup>11</sup> Land Conflict Watch, “J&K Forest Department Chops Apple Trees in Budgam, Razes Huts of Gujjars”. Accessed at <https://www.landconflictwatch.org/conflicts/j-k-forest-department-chops-apple-trees-in-budgam-razes-huts-of-gujjars>

<sup>12</sup> “Fruit growers of Kashmir protest halting of apple trucks; Admin says all trucks to be cleared tonight” (26th September 2022). Accessed at <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/sep/26/fruit-growers-of-kashmir-protest-halting-of-apple-trucks-admin-says-all-trucks-to-be-cleared-tonigh-2502139.html#:~:text=Members%20of%20the%20Fruit%20Growers,before%20it%20reaches%20the%20markets.>

21<sup>st</sup> November 2022

political repression and suppression of civil liberties is severe in the region, undermined by the growing presence of security forces.