

# UN rights chief calls for international inquiry into Kashmir violations

Decades of rights violations on both sides of the Line of Control in Kashmir have “claimed or ruined numerous lives” and should be the subject of a high-level international probe, the UN’s [human rights chief](#) said on Thursday.

Flagging the launch of the first UN human rights [report](#) on the disputed territory separating India and Pakistan, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein noted his intention to ask the [Human Rights Council](#) in Geneva to set up a commission of inquiry at its next session, beginning on Monday.

The High Commissioner – whose mandate ends this summer – highlighted what he called the “chronic impunity for violations committed by security forces” and said that the political nature of the conflict had masked the “untold suffering” of millions of people.

The main focus of the 49-page report is the use of reported “excessive force” by soldiers in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, although it also examines a range of rights violations in Pakistan-Administered Kashmir.

In Indian-Administered Kashmir, the report details how large demonstrations erupted in Jammu and Kashmir two years ago after Indian security forces killed the leader of an armed group.

It notes how “excessive force” led to the deaths of an estimated 145 civilians from mid-2016 to April this year.

Victims’ lack of access to justice remains a key challenge in Jammu and Kashmir, the report from the UN human rights office, [OHCHR](#), continues.

It details how bespoke legislation gives security personnel “virtual immunity” against legal redress unless the Indian government authorizes it, and says that “there has not been a single prosecution” in the nearly 30 years that the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act has been in force.

This “almost total impunity” has also hindered inquiries into enforced or voluntary disappearances, the report continues, citing allegations of mass graves in the state and the alleged mass rape of 23 women by soldiers in Kunan-Poshpora nearly three decades ago.

Turning to Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, the OHCHR report describes rights violations there as being “of a different calibre or magnitude”.

It details restrictions on freedom of expression and people’s right to peaceful assembly in two territories – Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and in

Gilgit-Baltistan – and expresses concern at the “very broad definition of terrorism” amid reports that hundreds of people have been detained under Pakistan’s anti-terrorism legislation in Gilgit-Baltistan alone.

Any resolution of the political situation in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Indian-administered Kashmir “must entail a commitment to end the cycles of violence and ensure accountability for past and current abuses by all parties”, Zeid said.