

Statement on Concerns about Public Health Situation in Jammu and Kashmir

We, the undersigned health activists, practitioners, networks, academics and individuals express our deepest concerns regarding the recent arbitrary abrogation of key parts of Article 370 as well as Article 35A of the Constitution of India, the bifurcation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and the loss of statehood. This was done without a semblance of consultation with the people of Jammu and Kashmir, in violation of the right of self-determination of the people of the state and in absolute contempt for constitutional and democratic processes.

The simultaneous clamping down on the freedoms and lives of the people of the state, creating fear and distress since the night of 4th August 2019 through arrests, shutting down of all communication services including landline telephones, mobiles, internet, television, enforcing silence, preventing movement of people and essential supplies has led to absolute disruption of life. We also express our indignation at the many statements that are a blatant violation of the rights and autonomy of the women of the state as well as all women of the country, being made especially by those in positions of power.

As health activists and practitioners, we are particularly concerned by several reports from the state that indicate the impact of the clampdown on people's health. Access to health care facilities and essential medicines are affected; life-saving [medicines are in short supply and stock-outs](#) are already evident. News reports of the lack of transport causing [pregnant women to travel long distances on foot for delivery](#) or not being able to make it to the hospitals, are extremely concerning. Patients suffering from cancer are finding it difficult to access life-saving chemotherapy. Patients on dialysis are [unable to make it to the hospitals. On the other hand](#), patients discharged from hospitals are unable to return home due to lack of transport. The non-availability of other medicines is also evident- [a report based on a fact finding](#) states, "an asthmatic auto driver in Srinagar showed us his last remaining dose of asthalin. He had been trying for the past several days to buy more – but the chemists' shops and hospitals in his area had run out of stocks". Several [people, including children, have been injured by pellet gunshots](#), with some having serious injuries. The implications for the mental health of the people residing in the state are extremely concerning - the severe distress, trauma and the high levels of psychosocial stress that the people [have been already experiencing](#), is likely to worsen.

The current situation is a blatant denial of the human rights to health and life, guarantees enshrined in the Constitution of India, including Article 21.

We, as health activists and concerned individuals demand:

- State must uphold its commitment to human right to health and ensure that all the constitutional guarantees towards this are fulfilled
- Allow patients to access health care without any delay or obstacles by removing all the restrictions on communications and transport
- Ensure immediate access to health care facilities- medicines, diagnostics and other medical supplies, ambulance service; including access to psychosocial care
- Ensure availability of essential supplies by Government across the State
- Prohibit the use of pellet guns and any other forms of violence against the people
- Take immediate action against those who have made statements violating the rights and autonomy of women in the state and to prevent any such further statements.
- Ensure immediate removal of the curfew and restoring of communications and transport facilities.

- Withdraw media blackout and restrictions on news regarding the ground situation especially related to conditions being faced by common people

We strongly demand that the Indian state must end all forms of repression and restriction of rights of people in Kashmir, and should ensure the full range of democratic rights and freedoms which are essential for health and wellbeing of the people.

Signed by

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