



CENTRE for AEROSPACE & SECURITY STUDIES

CASS Webinar Press Release

India-Pakistan Ceasefire on LoC: What Next?

For meaningful and result-oriented dialogue between Pakistan and India, restoration of status quo ante in Jammu and Kashmir as it existed prior to August 5, 2019, an end to India's hostile narrative and a positive role by the government and its media, would be required.

4 June 2021



This was the major conclusion of the interactive webinar on "India-Pakistan Ceasefire on LoC: What Next?" organized by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) here in Islamabad.

Speakers from Pakistan and India critically evaluated whether the February 26, 2021 joint statement issued by the Director Generals Military Operations of Pakistan and India announcing a ceasefire and an agreement to discuss core issues of concern was just another Confidence Building Measure or could pave the way for a comprehensive dialogue on all security issues between the two countries. Speakers from both sides of the border hoped that backchannel talks would lead towards rapprochement. However, there was consensus that optimism was overshadowed by genuine skepticism due to various obstacles and roadblocks in the way of this process, especially India's abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and worsening human rights violations in the Valley.

In her Introductory Remarks, **Ms Sitara Noor**, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies, observed that while any peace effort should be welcomed, it must be accompanied by mutual desire for peace.

Pakistan's 26th Foreign Minister **Ms Hina Rabbani Khar** emphasized that if rapprochement or normalization beyond the LoC was to happen, India would have to reverse its 5th August 2019 position. Without this reversal or even starting the process of reversal, no forward movement would be possible since the streets of Pakistan would never support it, nor would it suit the state of Pakistan. According to her, smart diplomacy was about converting negotiations into serious benefits for the people of the country and serving national interests. On US troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan, she said that Pakistan has always had immense concerns about India using Afghanistan as a platform to launch attacks inside the country, and documentation about these concerns had been shared with international organizations as well as bilaterally with the Indians.

According to **Dr Happymon Jacob**, Associate Professor of Diplomacy and Disarmament Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, the current ceasefire agreement between Pakistan and India was one of the most important developments in the last 18 years. In this regard, the informal backchannel negotiations had played a key role, he said, and hence, should be appreciated. He was of the view that India may, in the near future, be willing to talk with Pakistan on trade and other less difficult issues such as Sir Creek. However, on Kashmir, the Indian side might go slow. Dr Jacob also pointed out that Article 370 was unlikely to be returned to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. However, he said that there was a real possibility today that statehood would be returned to Jammu & Kashmir as part of a negotiated process.

Ambassador (Retd) Jalil Abbas Jilani, Director at the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies and former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, observed out that longevity of the ceasefire and initiation of a result-oriented peace process would depend on political commitment at the highest level whereby Prime Minister Modi would have to review his wooden-headed approach to the Kashmir dispute and aggressive posture towards Pakistan; formalization of the ceasefire in the form of a verifiable agreement; respite for the Kashmiris in Jammu and Kashmir by ending the lockdown; release of political prisoners; and their involvement in the peace process.

In his Concluding Remarks, Deputy President the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies and former Vice Chief of Air Staff, **Air Marshal (Retd) Farhat Hussain Khan** highlighted that abrogation of Article 370 and 35A had brought extreme miseries to the people of Jammu and Kashmir in general, and to the region in particular. He stressed that India has to show sincerity if it claims to be a partner in peace; and needed to stop human rights violations and give the Kashmiris their fundamental rights, as a first step. The Deputy President also pointed out that India must stop bringing settlers to make demographic changes in Jammu and Kashmir, revert the status of this disputed territory to pre-5th August 2019, followed by resumption of the process of Composite Dialogue to resolve issues through peaceful means.