

# **Governments of India and Pakistan should work towards the demilitarization of Siachen, the world's highest battleground**

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**Pakistan - India: How many more deaths will it take till you take note - Keep nationalism aside and then look at the Siachen issue (PIPFPD statement)**

## **Press Statement**

Pakistan - India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy

February 5, 2016

"How many deaths will it take till we know, that too many people have died"

Keep nationalism aside and then look at the Siachen issue

PIPFPD urges the governments of India and Pakistan to work towards the demilitarization of Siachen

Ten soldiers were buried in an avalanche at the Siachen glacier on Wednesday and the 'nation' has nothing to say besides mourn the deaths of these brave soldiers. The number of people killed and maimed in the war zone or those who have succumbed to extreme weather and calamities like avalanches is unacceptably high and unfortunately gets passed off as "collateral damage". At the avalanche in 2012 in Gyari, 140 Pakistani soldiers died. According to news [\[1\]](#) reports, "Since the start of Operation Meghdoot, India has lost 33 officers, 54 JCOs and 782 jawans due to climatic conditions, and environmental and other factors at Siachen. Last November, an officer of 3 Ladakh Scouts died after he was buried in an avalanche on the southern glacier."

Siachen is the world's highest battleground, contested by India and Pakistan since 1984 when India launched Operation Meghdoot. Both India and Pakistan lose soldiers, not to bullets, but to extreme weather conditions. Moreover, there are diverse aspects of the ecological impacts, climate change, threat to animal and plant species and pollution caused by human and military waste.

There have been numerous debates and deliberations on issues relating to the Siachen glacier which had come close to a solution. Consistent efforts over the years have led these measures as one among the Confidence Building Measures (CBM's) identified and accepted by both countries.

There is a need to look at this issue beyond the boundaries of nationalism. Trust deficits need to be addressed in a practical manner with a review of people affected, not just the soldiers who sacrificed their lives. Many others, especially, the hill communities, have been suffering on a day to day basis, as a result of this constant movement of the military forces. There is a lack of even recognising the number of civilians' casualties.

In this context we demand from the governments of India and Pakistan that they:

1. Agree to a phased withdrawal from the Siachen area. Such an agreement could embody the main points of the draft texts exchanged in 1992, which are now public. Further detailing if required, could be done by a group consisting of political representatives, people's representatives of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, military personnel, experts and environmental scientists;
2. Establish an India-Pakistan Joint Task Force to initiate the process of monitored and time-bound demilitarisation, followed by the detoxification and restoration of the Siachen glacier under the supervision of glaciologists, scientists and ecologists.
3. Understand this incident in the larger context and create a Siachen Trans-Boundary Peace Park. This "Mountain of Peace" will serve as a global example of our will to work together to benefit future generations.
4. Allocate adequate funds for rehabilitation of both civil and families of the affected soldiers.
5. Slash the enormously bloated defence budgets and reallocate resources towards poverty alleviation, education and health programmes that would be of substantive benefit to the mass of the people in both countries.

Thanking you,

(Jatin Desai) General Secretary  
(Anuradha Bhasin & Asha Hans) Co-Chairpersons

**Pakistan - India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFD)**

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**P.S.**

\* <http://www.sacw.net/article12369.html?utm>

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**Footnotes**

[1] <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/10-soldiers-trapped-after-avalanche-in-north-siachen/>