

Indian activists release report after visiting 'desolate' Kashmir

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Group of Indian activists calls for withdrawal of government's move to revoke special status of disputed region.

A group of Indian activists and members of leftist organisations has called for the withdrawal of the government's move to revoke special status of Indian-administered [Kashmir](#).

The group of activists, economists and writers presented their observations of the situation in Kashmir in the Indian capital New Delhi on Wednesday after returning from a five-day trip to the disputed region.

Kavita Krishnan, a left-wing activist, said the situation is "absolutely not normal", contrary to reports by several Indian news broadcasters.

"There is a sense of imprisonment. There is a sense of being in prison. And people are not being allowed to speak and the situation is extremely grim over there," she said.

"We were able to go to villages as well as small towns also. So the situation there is absolutely not normal. If some people of the media are saying all is well ... the only thing we could think of saying was all is hell is a better description," said Krishnan.

Activist Maimoona Moolah urged the Indian government to "stop this occupation" of Kashmir.

"The occupation of Kashmir will not work. Get rid of this occupation. Put an end to the way press and people have been gagged there. And return democracy to the region. Return Article 370 and 35(A)," she said.

"The whole place was desolate, quiet, silenced, caged. People looked helpless. People looked humiliated. And people also looked angry."

Jean Dreze, a Belgian-born Indian economist, slammed claims of Kashmir being backwards and needing investment from India and Indian companies.

"I have been to Kashmir four times since 2000 and every time, I am struck by the prosperity of the people. Especially the rural population. Especially in comparison with the catastrophic poverty and hunger of states like Bihar and Jharkhand and UP [Uttar Pradesh] that I am familiar with," he said.

The group compiled several videos of their trip showing deserted streets, bereft of people even on the festive day of [Eid al-Adha](#).

The Indian-administered portion of Kashmir has been under heavy security and an unprecedented communication lockdown since August 5, when Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) and his

government decided to revoke privileges of Jammu and Kashmir, including a right to their own constitution.

Modi's government has called it a move to integrate the disputed region into India, despite strong opposition from the people of Kashmir.

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