Searching for the disappeared in Kashmir: Gendered activism and the international human rights framework

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Since 1989 in the Indian controlled Kashmir more than 10,000 men have been subjected to enforced disappeared in the counter-insurgency actions by the Indian army. Kashmiri women mainly Muslim mothers and wives have organized under the banner of Association of the Parents of the Disappeared (APDP) to search for their disappeared men. In this paper I trace how these APDP activists propagate and sustain their struggle and operate under the rubric of international human rights framework to make a case for their search. This paper will shed light on how the under state violence the political activism of Muslim women evolves through the use of international human rights rubric and its relation with the Islamic injunctions that is stereotypically known for curtailing female public role. I will illustrate how the language of human rights proliferates collectively within the APDP as an organization and in the individual lives of the women. By providing ethnographic evidence of how the human rights framework negotiates with social, cultural and religious aspects of the lives of APDP activists, I will show how the international human rights framework is used to legitimize women’s activism in public, and brought at par with Islamic values of mercy, justice and gender rights.

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