

Canada and other nations have been quick to rush enormous quantities of aid to Pakistan in response to the earthquake which devastated Kashmir and other regions. While humanitarian concerns should be considered, it is necessary to be prudent to ensure that aid reaches the victims and is not diverted for other purposes.

Unlike neighboring India, Pakistan has spent disproportionate resources on military and nuclear weapons as well as backing terrorist groups in Kashmir. If Pakistan had invested in quake-proof infrastructure and decent health care, the nation would not have to beg for international charity in its time of need. Pakistan has been the beneficiary of billions in aid from the US, and yet there is very little socio-economic progress to show for it.

The Kashmir region has seen more than its fair share of suffering in the last few decades. The devastation of the earthquake has only added to the misery that has been inflicted by the scourge of Islamic terrorism. One of the little-known and poorly publicized facts about Kashmir is that the state has been the scene of one of the worst instances of ethnic cleansing in history. It is one of the world's most dangerous regions, with the armies of nuclear powers India and Pakistan standing eyeball to eyeball. Thousands of Afghan and al Qaeda terrorists have fled to Kashmir from US forces in Afghanistan, and have helped sustain the massive carnage and ethnic cleansing against the Hindu population.

The saga of modern conflict in Kashmir began in the 1930s. The ruler of Kashmir, Hari Singh, was faced with a brutal Islamic insurgency backed by the Muslim leaders, who later ruled Pakistan. The Kashmiri government wisely acceded to India. In 1947, after the British left the subcontinent, Pakistani irregulars and thousands of Pathan tribesmen from Pakistan and Afghanistan attacked Kashmir. The Pathans are the tribe, which formed the basis of Taliban support in Afghanistan; these tribes have a legendary reputation for ferocious barbarity. In 1947, after overrunning much of Kashmir they engaged in an orgy of looting and slaughter of civilians. Hari Singh appealed for Indian help, and the Indians were able to halt the invasion. The full scale intervention of the Pakistani Army ensured that Kashmir remained divided between India and Pakistan.

The UN called for a plebiscite to decide the future of Kashmir. Sadly, the Pakistani invasion, terrorism and slaughter of the Hindu population, and continued presence of foreign elements (such as Afghan terror groups) have rendered it impossible to conduct a free and fair referendum.

The population of Kashmir has been deliberately altered in a cold-blooded campaign of ethnic cleansing. An estimated 350,000 Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus) have been driven away to other parts of India by Islamic terrorists, where they languish in squalid refugee camps. In 1999, US Congressman Frank Pallone urged the National Human Rights Commission to classify the oppression of Pandits as Pakistani state-sponsored genocide. According to Stratfor Global Forecasting, al Qaeda has significant resources in Kashmir and competes with the Pakistani Army in organizing terrorist groups like Jaish Mohammed and Lakshar Toiba.

The Pakistani government has skillfully managed to continue backing the terror. Under enormous US and Indian pressure, Pakistan finally 'banned' the al Qaeda-allied Lakshar Toiba. Lakshar promptly merged with the Hizbul Mujahideen and continues to operate its camps and fundraising in Pakistan unimpeded.

With the incompetence of the Pakistani Army in organizing quake relief, reports indicate that terrorist groups have taken advantage of the disenchantment and stepped up recruiting in Kashmir. Thus, many of the supplies and resources being poured into the region are at risk of falling into the hands of terrorist forces. Stratfor reported in 2002 that al Qaeda views Kashmir as key to its anti-Western strategy, with recruitment among the huge Kashmiri Muslim population in the UK and Canada as a crucial aim.

Terrorist atrocities have not been impeded in any way by the earthquake; in fact, on October 9th, immediately following the earthquake, Islamic terrorists slaughtered ten Hindus in Kashmir by slitting their throats. The evidence suggests that various terror groups view the earthquake as a golden opportunity to recruit, pilfer supplies, and continue their genocidal campaign in Kashmir.

Considering the high stakes, humanitarian assistance to Pakistan and Kashmir must be accompanied by very strict conditions. Comprehensive on-site inspections in Pakistan by US and Indian intelligence to monitor terrorist camps and activities are an absolute necessity before aid is delivered. The disbursal of supplies must also be controlled to ensure delivery to the victims. For too long, Pakistan has abused the generosity of the West while continuing to foment terrorism, engage in genocide, and spread nuclear weapons technology to nations like Iran and Libya. Such a poor record means that the nation cannot be trusted to properly use international assistance where it is desperately required.