

 Menu Menu

Jammu Massacre: A forgotten story of how over 2 lakh Muslims were killed in Jammu which led to Kashmir issue

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After the Partition of India, during October–November 1947 in the Jammu region of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, a large number of Muslims were massacred and others driven away to West Punjab. The killings were carried out by extremist Hindus and Sikhs, aided and abetted by the forces of the Dogra State headed by the Maharaja Hari Singh. The activists of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) played a key role in planning and executing the riots.

In November 1947, thousands of Muslims were massacred in Jammu region by mobs and paramilitaries led by the army of Dogra ruler Hari Singh. The exact number of casualties in the killings that continued for two months is not known but Horace Alexander's article on 16 January 1948 in The Spectator is much quoted; he put the number killed at 200,000 and nearly half million forced into displacement across the border into the newly created nation of Pakistan and its administered part of Kashmir.

“The immediate impact (of partition) was in Jammu. The Muslim subjects from different parts of Jammu province were forcibly displaced by the Dogra Army in a programme of expulsion and murder carried out over three weeks between October–November 1947,” Idrees Kanth, a fellow at International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, who researched the 1940s history of Kashmir, told Al Jazeera.

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In mid-October, the Dogra Army troops began expelling Muslim villagers from Jammu province. The refugees were sent on foot toward West Punjab (later to form part of Pakistan), where most were accommodated in refugee camps in the districts of Sialkot, Jhelum, Gujrat and Rawalpindi.

On November 5, Kanth said, the Dogra Army soldiers began another organised evacuation of the Muslims but “instead of taking them to Sialkot, as they had been promised, the trucks drove them to forest hills of Rajouri districts of Jammu, where they were executed”.

The Muslims, who constituted more than 60 percent of the population of Jammu region, were reduced to a minority after the killings and displacement. To quote a 10 August 1948 report published in The Times, London: “2,37,000 Muslims were systematically exterminated – unless they escaped to Pakistan along the border – by the forces of the Dogra State headed by the Maharaja in person and aided by Hindus and Sikhs. This happened in October 1947, five days before the Pathan invasion and nine days before the Maharaja’s accession to India.” Reportedly, as a result of the massacre/migration, Muslims who were a majority (61 per cent) in the Jammu region became a minority.

Courtesy: Muslim Mirror

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