Two Faces of Media While Covering Human Right Activities in India

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The situation of human rights in India is a complex one, as a result of the country's large size and tremendous diversity, its status as a developing country and a sovereign, secular, democratic republic, and its history as a former colonial territory. The Constitution of India provides for Fundamental rights, which include freedom of religion. Clauses also provide for Freedom of Speech, as well as separation of executive and judiciary and freedom of movement within the country and abroad.

In its report on human rights in India during 2010, Human Rights Watch stated India had "significant human rights problems". They identified lack of accountability for security forces and impunity for abusive policing including "police brutality, extrajudicial killings, and torture" as major problems. An independent United Nations expert in 2011 expressed concern that she found human rights workers and their families who "have been killed, tortured, ill-treated, disappeared, threatened, arbitrarily arrested and detained, falsely charged and under surveillance because of their legitimate work in upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Despite state prohibitions against torture and custodial misconduct by the police, torture is widespread in police custody, which is a major reason behind deaths in custody. The police often torture innocent people until a 'confession' is obtained to save influential and wealthy offenders. G.P. Joshi, the programme coordinator of the Indian branch of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative in New Delhi comments that the main issue at hand concerning police violence is a lack of accountability of the police. About 800 people die after being tortured to death in Indian prisons each year.

Several international agencies and the UN have reported human rights violations in Indian-administered Kashmir. In a recent press release the OHCHR spokesmen stated "The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is concerned about the recent violent protests in Indian-administered Kashmir that have reportedly led to civilian casualties as well as restrictions to the right to freedom of assembly and expression." A 1996 Human Rights Watch report accuses the Indian military and Indian-government backed paramilitaries of "committ[ing] serious and widespread human rights violations in Kashmir." One such alleged massacre occurred on January 6, 1993 in the town of Sopore. TIME Magazine described the incident as such: "In retaliation for the killing of one soldier, paramilitary forces rampaged through Sopore's market setting buildings ablaze and shooting bystanders. The Indian government pronounced the event 'unfortunate' and claimed that an ammunition dump had been hit by gunfire, setting off fires that killed most of the victims." In addition to this, there have been claims of disappearances by the police or the army in Kashmir by several human rights organizations.