

# OUR OPINION, THEIR OPINION

"The goal of social justice and all round development can't be achieved through ideas but actions."  
Mchiel Alber

## Shame to humanity

Flood, drought, earthquake or any natural disaster leading to famine to kill thousands of human lives is a tragic but common phenomenon in human history. But when such a famine is engineered by human beings(?) themselves to kill their fellowmen, it is not only a crime but also a shame to humanity. Thus the declaration of a famine in the besieged Gaza should shame the world, which has failed to stop Israel's war crimes in the enclave. The International Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a UN-backed body which identifies hunger levels around the world, has declared that there is a man-made famine in Gaza and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has traced it to a "failure of humanity." The organisation has said Gaza is in Phase 5 of severe famine in which at least 30% of the children suffer from acute malnutrition and two out of 10,000 die every day due to starvation. It has said that a third of the population – nearly 641,000 people – are expected to face "catastrophic conditions". If the present conditions continue, nearly 1,32,000 children under five will face a threat to their lives. According to reports, at least 271 people, including 112 children, have died of starvation. Israel has weaponised hunger to punish the people of Gaza and to force them out of their land. This has been its strategy since the 2007 blockade – the restrictions have increased since then. The total blockade imposed since March this year has stopped the entry of all goods, including food, into Gaza. Food distributed by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation does not reach even a fraction of the people who need it. People who rush to food centres have been shot. Harrowing pictures of malnourished children in their mothers' arms have haunted the world for many days. The IPC says that an "immediate at-scale" response is needed to avert a catastrophe. The UN's Palestinian refugee agency, UNRWA, says there are about 6,000 trucks waiting at the borders for permission to take food to Gaza. But there is a determined plan at work to choke the supply and starve the people. Also Read: Netanyahu says Israel regrets 'mishap' at Gaza hospital killing 20 While talks for a ceasefire are continuing, the Israeli defence ministry has called up 60,000 reservists to seize and occupy Gaza City. Israel's backers are guilty of complicity in its crimes. The decision of some of its allies such as Britain to recognise a Palestinian state will not make much of a difference on the ground. Last week, the US sanctioned some international criminal court judges and prosecutors who are handling a case against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The global community has till now watched helplessly the atrocities on the Palestinians. The continuing military offensive and starvation in Gaza raise important moral and ethical questions. It is unfortunate that the world has chosen to merely watch, with no sign of intent to intervene and set things right.

## Silencing Palestinian media dates back to 1967

**With Israeli restrictions on foreign media entering Gaza, only local Palestinian journalists can bear witness to the killings and report them to a wider world. Indeed, nearly all of the nearly 200 journalists killed since Oct 7, 2023, have been Palestinian**

Five journalists were among the 22 people killed on Aug 25, 2025, in Israeli strikes on the Nasser Hospital in the Gaza Strip. Following global condemnation, the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a statement saying Israel "values the work of journalists." But the numbers tell a different story.

Those deaths bring the total number of journalists killed in Gaza in almost two years of war to 192. The Committee to Protect Journalists, which collates that data, accuses Israel of "engaging in the deadliest and most deliberate effort to kill and silence journalists" that the US-based non-profit has ever seen. "Palestinian journalists are being threatened, directly targeted and murdered by Israeli forces, and are arbitrarily detained and tortured in retaliation for their work," the committee added.

As a scholar of modern Palestinian history, I see the current killing of reporters, photographers, and other media professionals in Gaza as part of a longer history of Israeli attempts to silence Palestinian journalists. This history stretches back to at least 1967, when Israel militarily occupied the Palestinian territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip following the Six-Day War.

Beyond the humanitarian toll, what makes matters even more drastic now is that, with Israeli restrictions on foreign media entering Gaza, local Palestinian journalists are the only people who can bear witness to the death and destruction taking place – and report it to a wider world. Indeed, nearly all of the nearly 200 journalists killed since Oct. 7, 2023, have been Palestinian.

From the first days of the occupation in 1967, Israel has tried to keep a tight grip on media reporting, building a legal and military architecture that aimed to control and censor Palestinian journalism.

In August 1967, the army issued Military Order 101, effectively criminalizing "political" assembly and "propagandistic"

publications in the occupied territories.

Yet despite such restrictions, local journalism persisted and grew. But all Palestinian publications were subject to Israeli military censorship. Every night, editors were forced to submit two copies of everything they planned to print to Israeli censors. That included articles, photos, ads, weather reports and even crossword puzzles.

Anything the Israeli censor deemed to be "of political significance" had to be removed prior to publication. Editors who violated these terms, or who were accused of belonging to Palestinian political groups, could be detained or deported. These practices have echoes today with Israel often accusing the journalists it kills of being Hamas operatives.

Objecting to these and many other restrictions, Palestinians launched the first intifada, or uprising, against the Israeli occupation in December 1987. During the uprising's first year, Israeli forces reportedly jailed 47 Palestinian reporters, temporarily banned eight local and regional newspapers, permanently revoked the licenses of two magazines and closed four press service offices.

While intended to be a show of force, most Palestinians saw the restrictions as evidence that Israel was afraid of Palestinians reporting on their own conditions.

Many people hoped that the Oslo Accords – a series of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization that formally launched in 1993 – would lead to greater press freedoms. But it was not to be the case.

By the 2000s, Israel's attacks on journalists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip grew deadlier. Israeli forces fatally shot Palestinian photographer Imad Abu Zahra in Jenin in the West Bank in 2002. British filmmaker James Miller in Rafah in 2003, and Reuters cameraman Fadel Shana in Gaza in 2008.

The deadly force has not been limited to Palestinians in Gaza. In May 2022, Palestinian American

journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was killed in the Jenin refugee camp. One of the most famous Palestinian reporters at the time, Abu Akleh's death drew hundreds of thousands of mourners, while Israeli police beat pallbearers at her funeral service.

International humanitarian law makes clear that journalists are civilians and therefore cannot be targeted during combat. Israeli officials argue that their strikes are aimed at legitimate military objectives. A May 2023 report from the Committee to Protect Journalists concluded that Israel engaged in a "deadly pattern" of lethal force against journalists and failed to hold perpetrators accountable.

Palestinian journalists there often run toward bombardments when others run away. As a result, they are sometimes killed in "double-tap" strikes, where Israeli air and drone strikes return to an area that has just been struck, killing rescue workers and the journalists covering them.

All this has led to an unbearable personal toll for those continuing to report from within Gaza. On Oct. 25, 2023, Al Jazeera's Gaza bureau chief, Wael al-Dahdouh, was reporting live on air when he learned that an Israeli airstrike had killed his wife, two children and grandson. He returned on air the next day.

And the killing has not eased up. On Aug. 10, 2025, Israeli forces killed Anas al-Sharif in Gaza City, another prominent Al Jazeera correspondent who had stayed on the streets through months of bombardment. Five of his fellow journalists were also killed in the same airstrike. The Aug. 25 strike on Nasser Hospital is just the latest in this deadly pattern. Among the five journalists killed in that attack were freelancers working for Reuters and The Associated Press. As such, Palestinian journalists remain the primary witnesses of Israel's relentless assault on Gaza. And they are increasingly killed as they do so. The question remains whether the international community will hold Israel to account.

By-Maha Nassar

## Deluge and Disaster: Landslides

### Define India's 2025 Monsoon

By Komal

The 2025 monsoon season arrived two weeks ahead of schedule, hitting Kerala on May 24 and Mumbai by May 26, marking the earliest monsoon onset in the latter in 25 years. This early arrival brought intense rainfall across India, from the Himalayan foothills to the Northeast and southern states. While the monsoon is vital for replenishing rivers and sustaining agriculture, its ferocity this year has exposed India's vulnerabilities, with landslides and floods claiming lives and disrupting communities nationwide.

Himalayan States Bear the Brunt  
The Himalayan region, particularly Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, has been the epicenter of monsoon-related disasters. In Jammu and Kashmir, a massive landslide on August 27 along the Mata Vaishno Devi Yatra track in Katra killed at least 30 people and injured 23, following another landslide the previous day that claimed nine lives. The region recorded an unprecedented 368 mm of rainfall in a single day, overwhelming infrastructure and prompting the closure of schools and the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

In Himachal Pradesh, the Beas River overflowed in Manali, washing away a multi-storey hotel, shops, and homes, with the Manali-Leh highway blocked at multiple points. The state has reported 219 deaths this season, with landslides and flash floods contributing to 112 fatalities. Uttarakhand faced similar devastation, with the Char Dham Yatra suspended due to landslides blocking highways in Chamoli and Rudrapur. A flash flood in Dharali and Harshil villages left four dead and about 100 missing.

Northeast and Beyond: A Nationwide Crisis  
The Northeast has not been spared, with Assam reporting at least eight deaths from landslides and floods, and Arunachal Pradesh recording nine fatalities. The Brahmaputra River breached its banks, submerging vast areas and cutting off communities. In Odisha, over 160 villages were inundated as the Subarnarekha and Baitarani rivers swelled, while Uttar Pradesh saw more than 700 villages across 22 districts flooded. Even urban centers like Delhi faced severe waterlogging, with a Red Alert issued for intense rainfall and thunderstorms.

Climate Change and Human Factors Amplify Risks

Experts attribute the increasing severity of monsoon disasters to a combination of climate change and human activities. The 2025 season saw 14 western disturbances-unusually high for the monsoon period-intensifying rainfall in the Himalayas. These disturbances, linked to Arctic and West Asian warming, have shifted jet streams northward, fueling extreme weather events. Meanwhile, unchecked construction, deforestation, and hydropower projects have destabilized slopes, making landslides more frequent and deadly. In Jammu and Kashmir, for instance, construction along riverbanks and slopes has exacerbated vulnerability, with the 2014 Kashmir floods serving as a grim precedent.

Rescue and Relief Efforts in Full Swing  
State and national disaster response teams, including the NDRF and SDRF, have been deployed across affected regions. In Jammu and Kashmir, rescue operations continue along the Vaishno Devi route, though ongoing rain has hampered efforts. In Himachal Pradesh, the Indian Army and local authorities are clearing debris and restoring connectivity. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed intensified relief work, including arrangements for displaced residents and livestock. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the Vaishno Devi landslide, emphasizing the need for safety and support.

The 2025 monsoon season underscores a troubling pattern: while the rains are essential for India's agrarian economy, their increasing unpredictability and intensity, exacerbated by climate change, pose severe challenges.

The Himalayan states, with their fragile ecosystems, are particularly vulnerable, yet the recurring nature of these disasters highlights systemic failures in preparedness and mitigation. Despite warnings from past events like the 2013 Kedarnath floods and the 2018 Kerala deluge, large-scale infrastructure projects and urban expansion continue to encroach on sensitive zones, amplifying risks.

The surge in western disturbances, as noted by climate experts, signals a need for better meteorological modeling and early warning systems.

Moreover, the human toll-over 1,860 lives lost across India and Pakistan this season-demands a reevaluation of development policies. Urban planning must prioritize ecological limits, and stricter regulations on construction in landslide-prone areas are overdue.

While rescue efforts are commendable, they are reactive; proactive measures, such as reforestation and sustainable infrastructure, could reduce future losses. The government's reliance on disaster response teams, while necessary, cannot substitute for long-term strategies to address climate-driven monsoon anomalies. As the monsoon season continues, India must balance its developmental ambitions with the urgent need to adapt to a changing climate, lest the cycle of tragedy persists.

## Why August Is A Significant Month To Reflect On Indo-Soviet Treaty Of 1971 After 54 Years

August seems to be a significant month in Indo-Russian relations. The immediate significance may be the visit of the external affairs minister to Moscow and the firming up of Indo-Russian relations, especially with regards to trade. August has been significant too as India faces headwinds from the USA regarding tariffs and its purchase of Russian crude, which the US administration says has bankrolled Russia's war in Ukraine.

Russia has stepped in with the Russian Roman Babushkin saying the country would welcome Indian goods which face difficulty entering the US market because of the tariffs that kick in from August 27.

August has been a significant month in Indo-Russian relations historically. Fifty-four years ago, India and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics signed a Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation on August 5. The treaty went on to play a pivotal role not only in bilateral relations but also in the history of the subcontinent itself.

The treaty was indispensable for the success of India's 1971 war with Pakistan and in the liberation of its eastern wing, which was facing a genocide and ethnic cleansing of Bengalis at the hands of the Pakistani army allied with Islamist forces spearheaded by the Jamaat-e-Islami. (Interestingly, at the time of writing, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, in his first official visit to Dhaka, was meeting with representatives of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.)

As then Russian

Ambassador to India Nikolay Kudashev wrote in an article in August 2021 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty "...the Treaty was an integral part of the range of events, which had divided the history of South Asia into before and after, the third war between India and Pakistan, the creation of Bangladesh and the adoption of the relevant UN SC resolution strongly supported by the Soviet Union along with prevention of attempts to attack India by other powers".

During this War of Liberation of Bangladesh, along with India's generosity, fine diplomacy, decisiveness, and valour, a pivotal role was played by the Soviet Union. The astuteness of then prime minister Indira Gandhi to quickly conclude the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation in August 1971 had a direct impact on the decisive battle in the eastern war theatre between India and Pakistan. It also helped stem the genocide of the Bengali people unleashed by Pakistan's Operation Searchlight in March of that year.

The treaty was astutely devised and crafted. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that for the first time in its existence as a sovereign country, India, a declared non-aligned country, against the backdrop of the Cold War, concluded such an agreement with a super power. The treaty anchored bilateral relations, which developed in future to morph into the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership that India and Russia—the successor state of the USSR—share. It covered the entire gamut of



cooperation that two countries can engage in and which India and Russia have done and are doing—from technology to space, defence to culture.

The treaty's genius, however, lay in the fact that while it was not a defence treaty, it did open up the potential and formed the framework for defence cooperation. In part conditioned by Pakistan's increasing proximity to China and the US, a crucial clause that if either country was attacked, the other would consult to "remove such threat" and "take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries" became a deterrent for China, and US to intervene on the side of Pakistan.

In 1971, Pakistan was not the only country India was fighting. Pakistan was armed by the US, Jordan, Turkey, and Iran under then Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. Soviet military support allowed India to take on Pakistan. Following this, 1971 war hero Lt. General JFR Jacob is reported to have said: "The Russians helped us a lot. I always will appreciate it. I have a lot of time for the Russians."

When the UN wanted to send observers from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to both sides of India's borders with East Pakistan, something that would have exposed the Mukti Bahini, Soviet diplomats in the UN scuttled it. After the war began, Soviet veto in the Security Council gave enough time to Indian troops to move to Dhaka and get Pakistani troops to surrender.

For people of West Bengal, and indeed for Bengalis on either side of the border, however, the treaty had a different resonance. Youth of those years narrate even today how the slogan "B h a r a t - S o v i e t Chukti/Bangladesher Mukti" (Indo-Soviet Treaty/Bangladesh's Liberation) had become a popular one. The sailing of the US 7th fleet led by the world's largest nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal in December 1971 is what remains etched in their memory. Soviet intelligence also found a British naval group

moving into India's territorial waters in the West. The Soviets responded by dispatching their nuclear armed flotilla, the 10th Operative Battle Group (Pacific Fleet) from Vladivostok.

Consequently, the Soviet Union/Russia has followed the Shimla Agreement of 1972, taking a position against raising the Kashmir issue in the UN Security Council, seeing territorial disputes between India and Pakistan as strictly a bilateral issue.

A year later in 1972, the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971 became the template for the Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Treaty signed in 1972.

Today, there is once again a churning both in the neighbourhood and internationally, with trade wars being waged. Today is also a good day to revisit history, because in a world in major flux, and in spite of all their differences, India-Russia relations have a reassuring stability, much of it anchored in a treaty signed 54 years ago in the month of August.

By-Aditi Bhaduri