

IRIS Summer Fieldwork Award Report 2024  
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With the generous support of the IRIS Award, I was able to conduct extensive archival fieldwork in Kashmir that helped expose new perspectives and expand on the existing ones drawn from engaging with the several facets of life under militarization in Kashmir. The award enabled me to travel back to Kashmir and pursue the liminality of the archives at the Association of Parents of Disappeared People (APDP). This organization, often also identified as a movement, works with the families and communities of victims of enforced disappearance and holds an archive of more than 8000 such cases.

After the abrogation of the Special Status Act or Article 370 in August 2019, the militarized apparatus of governance intensified beyond measures. The Valley immediately went into an absolute lockdown before the rest of the world would in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A strict curfew, along with a total communication blackout, was implemented so that all forms of cellular and internet connections could be severed. The lockdown officially lasted till February 2021. Regular raids and crackdowns on human rights organizations, arrests of activists, and monitoring of employees became rampant. The APDP office was targeted along with other human rights organizations and was raided by several investigation agencies. Documents and archives were central to such raids that aimed to threaten and destroy the corpus of evidence of the atrocities perpetrated by the armed forces of the Indian nation-state.

I first visited the APDP office as an intern in 2018 and observed the transition post 2019, with every visit afterward as the organization navigated through these interventions to continue its work. During my last visit in 2023 (with the support of the IRIS Area and International Studies Awards for Incoming Graduate Students), I noticed the impact on archives, documents, and other materials that produced a space marked by APDP's history while working on the relationship between medicine and militarization in the valley.

With the gracious support of the IRIS Summer Fieldwork Award this summer, I was able to pursue the inquiries that arose from my experience of working with the organization last summer. This year, I spent eight weeks during June- July trying to trace the afterlives of archives under threat. I spent time documenting newspaper articles, reports, banners, placards, postcards, calendars, and such materials to trace the remnants of what was lost and destroyed. Several posters and paintings were displaced. Awards and nominations that acknowledged APDP's work are only digitally accessible now. Pheran and headbands (traditional Kashmiri clothing) were put in a box as the monthly sit-in protests organized by APDP could never take place in its regular protest site at Pratap Park after 2019. The loss and absence of archives and archival materials produced a greater dependency on extracting them from memories of existing dossiers and people who witnessed the lives of these materials and their impact on the movement.

I also studied the details of some of the most crucial cases of enforced disappearances in the valley and documented how the nature of reciprocation from the

State in terms of proving legal-judicial documents or compensation as a part of reparative justice changed over the years.

Expanding on last year's research on medicine and medical networks, I visited the headquarters of the Ministry of AYUSH, which is a governmental body working on traditional healthcare systems of India (broadly South Asia), such as Ayurveda, Yoga, and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy. I met and interviewed several Unani practitioners. I traveled to different parts of the region to visit them during their practice. I witnessed one of the doctors perform a cupping therapy, a surgical procedure in Unani. I walked through the inventory of Unani medicine at the hospital learning about their ingredients, availability, funding, production, distribution, and so on.

The experience of this fieldwork at the pre-dissertation stage helped me strengthen my connection with the community I plan to work with for my doctoral dissertation. Situated at a crucial juncture of my academic timeline, the outcomes of this fieldwork would help me work on my doctoral proposal and include emerging dimensions to it as the changing socio-political realities of the valley demand. I am grateful to IRIS for providing me with this opportunity, without which this fieldwork would not have been possible.