

# PTSD in Kashmir

Photographs & Text by  
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Indian-ruled Kashmir has one of the highest rates of post traumatic stress disorder in the world. Since 1989 when the armed conflict began, over 70,000 people have died and more than 8,000 have disappeared. With both Islamic militants and Indian security forces being held responsible for the turmoil, the results of the violence has caused a chronic trauma that affects nearly all of Kashmir's four million Muslims, countless numbers of Hindu and Sikh residents and those displaced.

A Kashmiri woman lies on a carpet receiving healing prayers and Quranic verses from Munshi Syed Hussain Kazmi, a peer or spiritual healer, October 19, 2011 in Srinagar, Kashmir, India. A few months pregnant, the woman is seeking a normal and healthy child birth following an earlier miscarriage she blames on her abusive in-laws. Following decades of militancy and Indian military presence, Kashmiris suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety or depression have searched for spiritual solace and comfort from peers. Kashmiris experience one of the world's highest rates of PTSD in the world.



For over two decades, many of Kashmir's medical doctors and psychiatrists have fled the violence. The condition of the state's mental health programs has deteriorated. Public and private hospitals and mental health clinics are overwhelmed with the numbers of patients. Pain, depression and anxiety are the norm. Kashmir now faces a rising drug addiction and suicide rate. To cope, many Kashmiris seek spiritual relief through prayer at traditional Sufi shrines and with peers or faith healers. Many Kashmiris in their early 20's have known nothing other than violence and horrific stories of disappeared family members and friends. Slowly, government recognition and assistance is beginning to materialize with the opening of a drug de-addiction center in Srinagar, the state's summer capital.





A Kashmiri man prays inside the Makhdoom Sahib Shrine October 19, 2011 in Srinagar, Kashmir, India. Women are forbidden from entering the inner area of the shrine. Built in 1649, the 450 year old shrine is named after Hamza Makhdoom, a 16th century mystic Sufi saint who helped spread Islam in Kashmir. The popular shrine often provides spiritual solace and comfort to those suffering from sickness or depression.

A Kashmiri woman seeks advice and the healing prayers from Munshi Syed Hussain Kazmi, (R), a peer or spiritual healer, October 19, 2011 in Srinagar, Kashmir, India. Following decades of militancy and Indian military presence, Kashmiris suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety or depression have searched for spiritual solace and comfort from peers. Kashmiris experience one of the world's highest rates of PTSD in the world.





Kashmiri men enter the Makhdoom Sahib Shrine to pray October 19, 2011 in Srinagar, Kashmir, India. Women are forbidden from entering the inner area of the shrine. Built in 1649, the 450 year old shrine is named after Hamza Makhdoom, a 16th century mystic Sufi saint who helped spread Islam in Kashmir. The popular shrine often provides spiritual solace and comfort to those suffering from sickness or depression.



A Kashmiri man lies on a carpet receiving healing prayers and Quranic verses from Munshi Syed Hussain Kazmi, (R), a peer or spiritual healer, October 19, 2011 in Srinagar, Kashmir, India. The man is seeking a happier marriage and believes in the peer's curative powers. Following decades of militancy and Indian military presence, Kashmiris suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety or depression have searched for spiritual solace and comfort from peers. Kashmiris experience one of the world's highest rates of PTSD in the world.



A Kashmiri man receives treatment for drug addiction October 13, 2011 at the Sri Maharaja Hari Singh hospital detoxification center October 13, 2011 in Srinagar, Kashmir, India. The 34 year-old man suffers from depression and had been unable to sleep when he was prescribed sleeping pills. He soon became addicted and is now in the SMHS hospital for a 21-day detox treatment. Following decades of militancy and Indian military presence, Kashmiris suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety or depression have gone to medical clinics or searched for spiritual solace and comfort from peers and spiritual healers. Kashmiris experience one of the world's highest rates of PTSD in the world.

Kashmiris wait for their boarding passes October 17, 2011 as they prepare to go Mecca on the Hajj in Srinagar, Kashmir, India. The Hajj, a 42-day trip, is the annual Islamic pilgrimage to the holyland in Mecca, Saudi Arabia and draws 3 million visitors each year. Nearly 8,000 Kashmiris will travel on Hajj in 2011. It is the largest yearly gathering of people in the world.





Kashmiri women pray at the Makhdoom Sahib Shrine October 19, 2011 in Srinagar, Kashmir, India. Women are forbidden from entering the inner area of the shrine. Built in 1649, the 450 year old shrine is named after Hamza Makhdoom, a 16th century mystic Sufi saint who helped spread Islam in Kashmir. The popular shrine often provides spiritual solace and comfort to those suffering from sickness or depression.

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