

## Curfewed Night by Basharat Peer.

Harper Press 2010.

I have read a number of books about Kashmir over the years, both in connection with its history during the Raj and at the time of Indian independence. More recently I had the pleasure of reading two books by Justine Hardy, one fiction the other fact, set in that troubled region.

In *Curfewed Night*, however, I have been exposed to the terrible reality of life for a Kashmiri Muslim under Indian rule, and find myself haunted by the story that it tells and the sensitivity and understatement with which its author tells it. Basharat Peer was born in Kashmir in 1977, though he now lives and works in New York, and he brings to vivid reality not just the experience of his own family under the brutal authority of the Indian army while he was growing up and in the first stages of his adult life, but that of his friends, many of whom joined the forces of resistance and were killed or captured and brutally tortured.

Reading the book, and comparing its tales of systematic, summary arrest, gratuitous rape and torture, mindless brutality, massacre and mass arrest, I was struck by the negligible coverage it receives in the world's press in comparison, say, to Israel. No intelligent reader could conclude *Curfewed Night* without wondering afresh not just at the indifference of the international community, or its hypocrisy, but the selectivity of its criticisms and condemnations.

But *Curfewed Night* is not just a grim read; it also speaks of family and clan solidarity, of love and loyalty, and of the strong sense of commitment to a land arbitrarily divided between India and Pakistan in 1947. Hopefully this book may prick a few consciences, and result in the beginning of a sustained process to set the people of Kashmir free.

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