

and separatists? To be fair to the author, he concedes that the Jammu and Kashmir High Court refused to ban the use of pellet guns. So who is right, Amnesty International or the Jammu and Kashmir High Court? In most cases the rule of law is above all, but when it contradicts a particular belief then the courts are under fire.

The *IJME* is meant to discuss issues related to medical ethics; defence of the country's sovereignty, counter-insurgency and the effects of the same should not feature on this platform. It is unethical to raise questions on the actions of the security forces, knowing full well that no one among them can respond.

Let us leave it to the newspapers and television channels to debate such issues; let us discuss only what we understand.

Conflict of interest statement

The author owns up to a conflict of interest. His son has been fighting anti-national forces for the last 12 years as an officer of the Indian Army.

Reference

1. David S. Use of pellet guns for crowd control in Kashmir: How lethal is "non-lethal"? *Indian J Med Ethics*. Published online on December 20, 2016. Available from: <http://ijme.in/articles/use-of-pellet-guns-for-crowd-control-in-kashmir-how-lethal-is-non-lethal/?galley=html>

A question of ethics, not nationalism: author's response

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The aim of the comment "Use of pellet guns for crowd control in Kashmir: How lethal is 'non-lethal'?"⁽¹⁾ was neither to disparage the armed forces, nor recommend counter-insurgency strategies, nor support any particular community or group. It sought to raise discussions around the question pointed out by the responder (2) himself, namely, "the ethical point of view" on the use of pellet guns in controlling violent mobs. The author also feels that the question is not so much about "favouring" the protestors or the security forces, but whether an instrument that causes significant fatalities and morbidities among bystanders should continue to be used as a method of crowd control.

Additionally, the author accepts that the conflict in Kashmir involves complex political dimensions, tragic human costs on all sides, and multiple ethical issues that need to be addressed; but concedes that this is a subject too vast to be addressed in a 1200-word commentary. The use of pellet guns would surely be

one of several ethical aspects of this conflict and no one ethical consideration takes precedence over the other.

While the author is not a spokesperson for Amnesty International, human-rights groups have condemned violence perpetrated by any group. Raising questions on judgments by the judiciary is a part of democracy, and the author feels that he, as an Indian, is entitled to do it.

Finally, the author believes that ethical questions can be raised by any person be it a protestor, security personnel, academician, scientist, farmer and even a doctor, as ethics deals with principles of right and wrong. Hence, the author (whose grandfather was a decorated lieutenant commander in the Indian Navy) feels that having or not having a family member in the armed forces is not a test, or a conflict of interest, while talking about ethical issues. And it is surely not a badge of nationalism.

References

1. David S. Use of pellet guns for crowd control in Kashmir: How lethal is "non-lethal"? *Indian J Med Ethics*. Published online on December 20, 2016. Available from: <http://ijme.in/articles/use-of-pellet-guns-for-crowd-control-in-kashmir-how-lethal-is-non-lethal/?galley=html>
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