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Kashmir Police Raid Bookshops, Seize 'Secessionist' Literature

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Srinagar police have conducted a series of raids on local bookshops, seizing 25 titles that authorities claim promote secessionist sentiments. Among the confiscated works is *Azadi* by Booker Prize-winning author Arundhati Roy, a book known for its critical take on the political situation in Kashmir.

According to police statements, the seizures were made under directives aimed at curbing the circulation of material deemed to threaten the “sovereignty and integrity” of India. Officials said the targeted books allegedly contain narratives that could incite unrest or support separatist ideologies.

The raids, carried out across several areas of Srinagar, have sparked a wave of criticism from residents, writers, and civil liberties groups, who argue that such measures amount to censorship and the suppression of dissent. “The state should engage with ideas, not ban them. Silencing authors only deepens mistrust,” said a local academic who requested anonymity due to fear of reprisals.

Bookshop owners expressed concern over the lack of clarity in the government’s list of prohibited titles. Some claimed they were unaware the books were considered illegal until police arrived. “We sell what is available in the market. If they want to ban something, they should formally notify us first,” said one shopkeeper in the Lal Chowk area.

Human rights advocates have warned that such actions could have a chilling effect on freedom of expression in the region, which has already faced prolonged communication blackouts and strict security controls. They argue that banning literature, particularly works by internationally recognized authors, undermines the democratic principles of open debate and intellectual exchange.

Authorities have yet to release a full list of the confiscated titles, but sources indicate that other books by Kashmiri and international writers critical of government policies were also seized. The incident adds to ongoing concerns about the shrinking space for free speech in Kashmir, where journalists, activists, and now booksellers are increasingly finding themselves under scrutiny.