

Mrs Anne Main MP
St Albans



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

2 September 2019

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to outline my concerns regarding the deepening crisis in Kashmir and the Indian government's decision to remove Article 370.

I am alarmed by Prime minister Modi's abolition of the seven-decade privileged status of Indian-administered Kashmir as detailed in Article 370. This bill, which has been passed through the Indian parliament, means Kashmir will be split into two territories governed directly by Delhi.

The removal of Article 370, and the special status of Kashmir, means the Indian government is illegally removing the sovereignty of the Kashmiri people. This is a blatant attack on the independent status of Kashmir and a violation of its' prerogative to self-govern.

I am particularly concerned by the Indian government's decision to send 38,000 more military officers to the region to enforce this decision. This is on top of the already 700,000 strong forces stationed there. India has cut off all internet and telephone networks in the region and public gatherings have been forbidden, contributing to the Kashmiri people's distress.

It is worrying that there are reports of political leaders and activists, including two former chief ministers of Jammu and Kashmir, being incarcerated. Further, a number of Kashmiri's have been the victims of violence and oppression at the hands of government-controlled security forces who have indiscriminately used harmful weapons, such as pellet-firing shotguns, on Kashmir's citizens.

The Indian government's decision will have far-reaching consequences and has the potential to exacerbate simmering geo-political tensions in the region. As it stands, Pakistan has called India's revocation of Article 370 an illegal occupation and has cut diplomatic ties and suspended trade with India as a result.

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India should not be inflicting further harm on the region as this could lead to long-term instability for the entire Indian sub-continent. It could also catalyse an escalation in religious violence and abuses directed towards India's Muslim population.

I believe the UK government should ask our Indian counterparts to repeal unjust laws like the Public Safety Act and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act which gives government forces immunity and encourages them to act violently towards Kashmiris.

We should also press for the Indian government to conform with international human rights law in relation to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, begin the process of demilitarisation, and conduct the plebiscite as mutually agreed in the Indian-occupied part of Kashmir via UN Security Council Resolutions.

The Indian government's unilateral abrogation of Article 370 should be condemned, and it should be held responsible for the repression experienced by Kashmiri people thus far.

As you will know, I have been engaged with the Rohingya refugee crisis for some time and there are clear parallels with their situation and that of the Kashmiris. There are Rohingya people currently in Kashmir who have become a target of violence carried out by Indian security forces. Disturbingly, there are reports that the ferocity of these attacks has increased in recent weeks as a result of the government's announcement to abolish Article 370 which has stirred nationalist and anti-Muslim sentiment in the region.

In light of these troubling developments, I would be grateful if you could meet with me and representatives from the St Albans Islamic Centre to discuss the worsening situation in Kashmir and what this government can do to alleviate the plight of the Kashmiri people.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Main".

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