

KASHMIR SELF-DETERMINATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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JKCFA Aide Mémoire: Kashmir Self-Determination and Human Rights

For the Westminster Hall Debate, 10 December 2025, written by Sardar Aftab Khan

The forthcoming Westminster Hall debate on Government support for self-determination in Kashmir (10 December 2025, led by Imran Hussain MP) requires close attention to the region's protracted conflict and its human, political and development impacts across all parts of Jammu & Kashmir—Indian-administered J&K and Ladakh; Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK); and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

Over **one million British residents of Jammu & Kashmir origin** (including MPs, councillors and thousands of professionals) trace their heritage to the region; any violence or rights abuses there deeply affect these communities and distract them from contributing to UK life. Indeed, Kashmiris in the UK observe 24th October as “[Kashmir National Day](#)” to celebrate their identity, renewed resolve and commitment to achieve the right to self-determination and 27 October as “Kashmir Black Day” – a global day of solidarity and remembrance of the loss of autonomy in 1947 [\[1\]](#).

UK policy to date

Successive UK Governments have insisted Kashmir is a bilateral issue: the Foreign Office in June 2025 reaffirmed that “India and Pakistan are important friends” and that it is for them to negotiate a resolution, “*considering the wishes of the Kashmiri people*”[\[2\]](#). This approach (echoing UN Security Council Resolutions) falls short of acknowledging the legitimate **Kashmiri aspiration for self-determination**. Indeed, in October 2025 Imran Hussain MP sponsored a Parliamentary motion noting that “*lasting peace in the region cannot be achieved without dialogue that includes the voices and aspirations of the Kashmiri people themselves*” and calling on the UK Government to recognize its “moral, historic and legal duty... to ensure the birth right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir”[\[3\]](#). Current UK policy also neglects widespread **human rights violations and development barriers** across the region. Independent monitors report abuses in every area of J&K.

Human Rights and Governance in Indian-Administered Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh

In Indian-administered Kashmir, the 2019 revocation of Article 370 saw an immediate security lockdown: thousands of Kashmiri politicians, lawyers and journalists were detained without charge, communications were cut off, and credible allegations of torture and beatings by Indian forces emerged[\[4\]](#). Curfews and internet shutdowns have persisted; Human Rights Watch noted in 2020 that hundreds remained jailed under the Public Safety Act (PSA, which allows detention without trial [\[5\]](#)). The **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** (in effect in Kashmir) continues to give broad immunity to security forces. The recent Home Office–commissioned Parliamentary report documents the PSA/AFSPA regime: as one EDM explains, these laws “*enable arbitrary detention and excessive force without accountability*”[\[6\]](#). Independent UN experts have condemned India's post–April 2025 counter-terrorism operations in J&K, reporting ~2,800 mass arrests (including journalists and activists), many held incommunicado under draconian laws[\[7\]\[8\]](#). There are credible reports of torture, deaths in custody and forced disappearances of Kashmiri activists[\[7\]\[8\]](#). **Punitive home demolitions and evictions** (often of families of alleged militants) have escalated, despite a 2024 Indian Supreme Court ruling that such practices violate rights to life and dignity[\[9\]\[8\]](#). In sum, Kashmiri political prisoners routinely face “inhuman or degrading treatment”[\[7\]](#), and ordinary civilians live under heavy militarisation.

Impact on Development and Daily Life

These abuses directly undermine Kashmiris' [right to development](#). Education and health services are repeatedly disrupted by violence; for example, countless schools and hospitals in Kashmir have been damaged by cross-border shelling or the 2005 earthquake, and lack of infrastructure (roads, reliable electricity and water) thwarts investment. Young Kashmiris face a bottleneck: higher education attainment is relatively high, yet local economies cannot absorb graduates[\[10\]](#). Water resources are politicised (following India's suspension of Indus River data-sharing, post-2025 tensions, AJK farmers now cannot plan crops reliably [\[11\]](#)).

In Indian Kashmir, internet blackouts (often imposed during unrest) also cripple business, education and civil society.

Pakistan-Administered AJK: Lethal Crackdowns on Civil Protest

Similarly, Pakistan has started a telecommunications and internet blockade in AJK and GB. These development constraints fuel anger, as reflected in repeated strikes: in **Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK)** (Pakistan-administered), the October 2025 shutdown led by the Jammu & Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC) was met with lethal force. Press reports confirm "*at least nine people were killed*" and hundreds were injured before an uneasy ceasefire[\[12\]\[13\]](#). JKJAAC has confirmed 7 civilian deaths and serious life-changing injuries to 53 civil society activists in three regions of AJK (32 in Muzaffarabad, 15 in Poonch and 6 in Mirpur). Protesters were demanding local ownership, participatory governance, economic rights (e.g. fair electricity and wheat pricing) and political reforms. The Pakistan authorities' October 2024 "Peaceful Assembly" ordinance – which effectively outlawed unregistered protests – was only withdrawn under public pressure[\[14\]](#), underscoring how even basic rights to assemble and advocate are under attack.

Governance, Repression and Resource Exploitation in Gilgit-Baltistan

Gilgit-Baltistan faces similar straits. Decades of neglect and colonial-era governance have deprived the region of meaningful representation[\[15\]](#). Local groups like the Gilgit-Baltistan Awami Action Committee (AAC) decry federal appropriation of their land and minerals. In May 2025, authorities **arrested AAC leaders and civil activists** on dubious anti-terror charges after a peaceful rally on resource rights[\[16\]\[17\]](#). The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan protested, calling the crackdown a threat to "fundamental rights" and demanding their immediate release[\[17\]](#). Critics note that projects like the Diamer Dam have wiped out centuries-old heritage sites, **damaged the environment** and displaced locals without fair compensation[\[18\]](#). Economically, Gilgit-Baltistan, despite potential for hydro-power and tourism, remains underdeveloped, as Islamabad and foreign firms exploit its resources while ordinary citizens see little benefit.

Democratic Restrictions in Pakistan-Administered Kashmir

Finally, even **Pakistan-administered Kashmir (AJK)** has political restrictions: The indigenous political parties that don't believe in J&K's accession with Pakistan are barred by the AJK election commission from getting registered and filing their candidates for the local or AJK Assembly elections; therefore, people cannot vote for their preferred candidates in elections, and Islamabad retains veto power over the AJK legislature. Azad Kashmir's public finances are heavily tied to Pakistan's purse. Last year's JKJAAC demands included abolishing 12 legislative seats in AJK reserved for Pakistani Kashmiris (refugees from Indian Kashmir permanently settled in Pakistan) to make representation more democratic[\[19\]](#). The USA-based Diplomat magazine reports that the AJK government even tried to curb dissent with an ordinance requiring official permits for protests (later revoked)[\[14\]](#). Such measures, along with reported assaults on rivals and the co-option of AJK politicians, stymie local self-governance and thus development.

Impact on the UK Kashmiri Diaspora and UK Interests

The Kashmiri diaspora in Britain includes MPs, business people, and professionals deeply invested in both the UK and Kashmir. They report that violence or repression back home “distracts” them economically and emotionally; British Kashmiri diaspora community leader Sardar Aftab Khan explained that even while physically in the UK, Kashmiris “**mentally and emotionally**” remain bound to their homeland’s fate^[2]. Unaddressed grievances (for example, relatives detained or killed, or economic hardship in their village) can foster trauma, communal tension and distrust of the authorities here. For the UK polity, stability in South Asia matters: unresolved conflict in Kashmir has repeatedly drawn India and Pakistan to the brink of war (e.g. 2021 skirmishes, May 2025 cross-border strikes)^[20], which could threaten regional order and the many UK citizens resident in both countries.

Proposed UK Parliamentary Actions

To better serve justice, peace and British interests, MPs should consider the following measures:

1. Affirm the Right to Development and Self-Determination

Issue a cross-party statement or motion (See, Appendix-1) acknowledging that Kashmiris have a legitimate right to development, including the right to self-determination under international law (as UN SC Resolutions affirm). This could include a motion supporting the October 2025 EDM’s call for “dialogue that includes the voices and aspirations of the Kashmiri people”^[3]. At minimum, a Parliamentary question or Urgent Question should demand Foreign Office action on recent AJK and Gilgit rights reports and the FCDO annual “Human Rights and Democracy Report” must provide a detailed account of rights violations in Indian administered Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

2. Condemn Rights Violations by All Parties

Pass a resolution condemning human rights violations in all Jammu & Kashmir regions. Specifically, draw attention to credible reports of torture, incommunicado detention, and extrajudicial killings by Indian forces^{[7][8]}, and of lethal crackdowns by Pakistani authorities in AJK/GB^{[12][17]}. Urge the UK Government to raise these cases with New Delhi and Islamabad, pressing for independent inquiries. MPs should call on Britain to support international fact-finding (e.g. through the UN or Commonwealth) into these abuses.

3. Apply Targeted Sanctions

Use the UK’s Global Human Rights Sanctions regime and use Magnitsky-style sanctions and travel bans on individual perpetrators on both sides. This could mirror actions taken by other democracies: for instance, Europe has barred visas for identified Indian paramilitary commanders involved in Kashmiri civilian killings. Parliament could pass a motion urging sanction lists to cover officials who authorised PSAs/AFSPA abuses or ordered security crackdowns in AJK/GB^[6].

4. Review UK Arms Exports and Aid

Scrutinise any UK arms sales or defence assistance to India and Pakistan in light of these conflicts. Consider suspending any equipment transfers (even “peace-time” kit) that might be used in repression. Also, review British development aid and loans affecting the region: UK officials should ensure funds do not subsidise institutions linked to rights abuses or arms procurement.

5. Parliamentary inquiry or Committee debate.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Kashmir should monitor the situation and gather testimony (including from diaspora, NGOs and victims' families). Call for a Foreign Affairs Select Committee or independent inquiry into Kashmir policy, covering not only Indian-administered Jammu Kashmir, Ladakh, but also AJK and GB. This would counter the historical neglect noted in EDM 2184 (which laments that “successive UK governments have failed to give the Kashmir issue the diligence, urgency and international attention it deserves”[\[21\]](#)).

6. Engage the Kashmir diaspora and civil society.

Involve UK-based Kashmiri communities as stakeholders. Parliament should invite diaspora organisations (e.g. [Kashmir Development Foundation](#), [JKCHR](#), [JKCFA](#), JKNIA) to provide evidence at APPG on Kashmir or Committee sessions. Encourage MPs (especially those representing large Pakistani/Kashmiri communities) to meet constituents on this issue. A UK-backed platform for Kashmiri civil society (for example, a UK Institute-sponsored seminar) could amplify voices calling for rights and development.

7. Raise the Issue Internationally

The Commons call upon the government to include the resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir conflict as one of the key aims and objectives for the forthcoming UK presidency of the UN Security Council in 2026, and raise Kashmir at the UN Human Rights Council and Geneva meetings. Britain can leverage its Commonwealth and G7 positions to demand Pakistan and India report on human rights in Kashmir, and to include these topics in dialogue agendas (e.g. UK-India Strategic Dialogue). Pass a motion to urge: “the situation in Kashmir is an international concern; continued repression there risks human security and cross-border conflict, requiring co-ordinated global engagement”[\[3\]](#). These measures should explicitly cover *all regions* of Jammu and Kashmir. For example, any motion or inquiry should mention Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan by name, as well as Indian-administered Kashmir and Ladakh. The recent AJK protests illustrate that violations by Pakistani authorities are no less real than those by India[\[12\]\[17\]](#). (Acknowledging abuses on both sides also preserves UK credibility as an honest broker.)

Conclusion

The people of Kashmir have endured decades of conflict, rights abuses and economic exclusion. The UK–Kashmir diaspora’s stake in this is profound. As Imran Hussain MP and dozens of MPs have urged[\[3\]](#), Britain should use the upcoming debate to break with complacency. By calling for self-determination *and* holding both governments to account for human rights, Parliament can help press for a just, lasting solution – fulfilling its moral duty and supporting regional stability.

The people of Jammu & Kashmir have endured decades of conflict, political repression and structural deprivation. The UK–Kashmir diaspora’s stake in this is profound. UK Parliament now has an opportunity and a responsibility. We urge all the MPs to use the upcoming debate to break with complacency—to advocate for human rights, democratic freedoms and the legitimate right of the Kashmiri people to determine their own future.

By urging action and accountability on both sides, MPs can help advance peace, justice and stability in a region central to UK diaspora communities and wider British interests.

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Government Support for Self-Determination in Jammu & Kashmir

That this House notes with concern the continuing human-rights situation across all regions of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, including Indian-administered Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan; further notes credible reports from United Nations experts and international human-rights organisations of arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, inhuman or degrading treatment of detainees, excessive use of force against civilians, restrictions on freedoms of expression, assembly and movement, and structural obstacles to social and economic development; expresses deep concern at the recent lethal crackdown on peaceful civil-rights demonstrations in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the continued detention of civil-society activists in Gilgit-Baltistan; acknowledges the emotional, cultural and family impact of these developments on over one million UK residents of Jammu and Kashmir heritage; further recognises that a just and sustainable peace cannot be achieved without the inclusion of the Kashmiri people and the fulfillment of their internationally recognised right to self-determination; and therefore **calls on the Government** to:

1. **Publicly affirm the legitimate right of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to self-determination under international law**, as set out in relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.
2. **Press both the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan** to allow unfettered access for international human-rights bodies, to uphold international humanitarian and human-rights standards, and to ensure independent investigations into all allegations of violations;
3. **Appoint a UK Special Envoy for Human Rights and Development in Jammu and Kashmir**, responsible for engaging with governments, civil society, UN mechanisms and diaspora communities, and for reporting annually to Parliament;
4. **Initiate or support an independent parliamentary inquiry or Select Committee** examination into the UK's historic and contemporary role in relation to Jammu and Kashmir, and into current human-rights and development conditions in all areas of the region;
5. **Introduce and apply targeted sanctions**, including Magnitsky-style asset freezes and travel restrictions, against individuals credibly identified as responsible for serious human-rights violations in any part of Jammu and Kashmir;
6. **Conduct a review of UK arms export licences and defence cooperation** with India and Pakistan to ensure that British-supplied equipment cannot contribute to repression or human-rights abuses; and
7. **Support increased international engagement**, including at the UN Security Council, UN Human Rights Council and through Commonwealth and G7 diplomatic channels, to promote human-rights protection, rule of law, and a peaceful political process which fully reflects the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

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