

A New Dawn for Jammu and Kashmir: Why the UN Must Lead a Multilateral Path to Lasting Peace

By Sardar Aftab Khan

London, July 2025 – Seventy-seven years after the first ceasefire drew the line across Jammu & Kashmir, the bitter legacy of partition still haunts its mountain passes and river valleys. Civilians on both sides of the Line of Control live under heavy military shadow, even as hopes for resolution flicker in the chilly night air. It's time, argues Sardar Aftab Khan of the [Jammu Kashmir Council on Foreign Affairs \(JKCFA\)](#), to break this cycle—not through bilateral brinksmanship, but by harnessing the full weight of United Nations multilateralism.

From Frozen Conflict to Transformative Process

Since 1947, conflicts over the former princely state have cost countless lives, displaced families, and bred a siege mentality that stifles voices of moderation. Traditional diplomacy has treated Jammu and Kashmir like a problem to be “settled”—with ceasefires, plebiscites, or blanket integration into India or Pakistan. Yet none of these stopgap measures has healed decades of distrust or addressed the deep wounds of identity, rights abuses, and power imbalances.

“What we need now,” writes Khan, “is a process-driven framework rooted in international law, inclusive dialogue, and sustained civic engagement—not another one-off agreement that unravels within months.” Rather than see Kashmir as a bilateral impasse, he insists, the UN Security Council should reassert its oldest mandates, engage its top legal bodies, and forge a living architecture for conflict transformation.

Six Steps to a Multilateral Solution

Drawing on lessons from Cyprus, Timor-Leste, and other protracted conflicts, the JKCFA position paper outlines six interlocking measures:

- 1. Reinvigorate Legal Mandates.** Refer Kashmir to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on plebiscite procedures, sequencing of demilitarisation, and transitional-justice guarantees. At the same time, launch UN-moderated dialogues among India, Pakistan, and Kashmiri representatives.
- 2. Launch a Peace Transformation Commission.** A standing, Chapter VII-mandated body would oversee phased troop withdrawals, district-level citizens' juries on governance and rights, and pilot confidence-building measures such as family reunions and across the UNMOGIP-monitored ceasefire line trade links.
- 3. Embed Human-Rights Monitoring.** Co-design with local NGOs a “Peace, Justice & Resolution Scorecard” that tracks security, health, education, and freedom-of-movement indicators—triggering rapid UN responses when conditions deteriorate.
- 4. Convene a Transformation Forum.** An informal coalition of UN member states, regional bodies (SAARC, SCO, OIC), and civil-society networks would sustain technical working groups on governance reform, economic recovery, youth exchanges, and psychosocial healing.
- 5. Strengthen UNMOGIP's Role.** Empower the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan to feed detailed ceasefire reports into the Scorecard and support reconciliation workshops along the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir.

6. Embed Transitional Justice Mechanisms. Establish a truth and reconciliation commission, deploy UN-trained trauma-response teams, and launch survivor-led reparations programmes to heal deep social fissures.

Why the World Cannot Wait

The urgency of this plan is hard to overstate. Recent skirmishes in May 2025 reignited fears that a minor spark could engulf South Asia in a wider conflagration. Meanwhile, ordinary Kashmiris endure international travel restrictions, checkpoints, curfews, and constrained civil liberties—conditions that breed resentment and radicalisation in equal measure.

“Without a sustained UN-led process,” Khan warns, “every new ceasefire rings hollow, and every unilateral move deepens the sense of injustice.” By institutionalising a multiyear, legally grounded transformation framework, the Security Council can restore civilian safety, uphold fundamental rights, and reinvigorate hopes for shared prosperity.

A Call to Pakistan, India and the UN

For Pakistan and India, embracing this pathway means ceding a measure of bilateral control in order to secure a broader guarantee of peace. For New Delhi, it will require serious engagement with international legal advice on plebiscite modalities and a willingness to revisit the constitutional changes of August 2019. For Islamabad, it offers a tangible mechanism to protect Kashmiri voices and shape reconstruction of inclusive local governance.

Finally, the UN Security Council must reclaim its own fading credibility on South Asia’s oldest agenda item. A Presidential Statement reaffirming Resolutions 47 (1948) and 80 (1950), followed by a clear roadmap for ICJ referral and a standing Peace Transformation Commission, would demonstrate that multilateralism still has the power to turn conflict into cooperation.

Looking Ahead

The Kashmir dispute defies quick fixes. But a process-driven, multilateral engine—anchored in legal clarity, rigorous monitoring, and community-led dialogue—can transform a frozen stalemate into a dynamic path toward reconciliation. It’s a bold agenda, but as Kashmir’s mountains teach us, only by unfreezing long-held divisions can new streams of hope begin to flow.

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