

June 15, 2020

Members of the United Nations General Assembly,

Re: Request to reject India's bid for a seat on the UN Security Council

Your Excellency's,

The Kashmir Scholars Consultative and Advocacy Network (KSCAN) is an interdisciplinary group of academics, activists and artists from all over the world, engaged in research and advocacy on the disputed region of Kashmir.

As you gather to decide who should represent the world community on the UNSC, we, members of KSCAN, wish to bring to your attention a few facts regarding India, one of the contenders for membership of the UNSC. As the sole candidate for Asia Pacific, [India has campaigned](#) for this post for years and is confident of winning a non-permanent UNSC seat without any opposition. India's former permanent representative at the United Nations, [Syed Akbaruddin, recently claimed](#) that India deserves this position based on its credentials as the "world's largest democracy."

Respected members, we are writing to request you to consider India's record as a *failed democracy*, a state that acts aggressively against minorities, vulnerable populations, dissidents, and freedom-fighting populations, and a gross violator of international obligations. We respectfully ask you to therefore reject India's bid for a seat on the UN Security Council.

As you consider India's membership, we impress upon you to please recognize that India is rapidly turning into an [ethno-nationalist state](#). The United States Commission for International Religious Freedom has [flagged India as a country of particular concern](#) for the parlous state of its religious freedoms, especially vis-à-vis Muslims and Christians. The [United Nations Human Rights Office has condemned the Indian Government's introduction of discriminatory practices](#) such as the Citizenship Amendment Act, and Genocide Watch has issued a [Genocide Watch for the Indian state of Assam](#) and for [Kashmir](#). Even during this COVID-19 pandemic, India has committed several and grave [violations of the fundamental rights of its own minority citizens](#), while Hindu Supremacists, ["besotted with Mussolini's fascists,"](#) continue their rampage to make India a Hindu Nationalist state.

Furthermore, we wish to remind you that on August 5, 2019, India, unilaterally, and in [flagrant violation of international law and UNSC resolutions](#), annexed the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the world's most densely militarized zone. Since August 5, 2019, the 13-14 million people of Kashmir have been under an inhumane lockdown and a record-breaking communications clampdown: both manifestly undemocratic to the core. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has raised concerns regarding Jammu and Kashmir in [2019](#) and [2020](#). While the world is busy responding to the pandemic, [fighting continues on the Line of Control between India and Pakistan](#), putting the lives of Kashmiris at risk. Recently, India introduced [a new Domicile Law](#) in Kashmir and has now [formally launched a settler-colonial project](#) aimed at demographic change in the besieged territory in order to obviate the possibility of a peaceful resolution of this international dispute. The plan to permanently settle in Kashmir the soldiers and families of the Indian Army that has [long suppressed indigenous Kashmiris with impunity](#), accelerates

the [risk of an outright genocide](#); indeed this plan already constitutes the definition of “[cultural genocide](#).” With [continued lack of freedom of press and expression, the incarceration of journalists in Indian Administered Kashmir](#), and [arbitrary detentions](#), the basic human and political rights of Kashmiris stand at an all-time low.

India has [declared its UNSC priorities](#) to prominently include fighting “terrorism”: a convenient bogey used to criminalize and decimate Kashmiris and many other indigeneous peoples historically struggling for justice, dignity, freedom and independence. The trope of “terrorism” serves to obfuscate the reality of Indian expansionism. Any talk of “terrorism” in Kashmir cannot be separated from in-depth conversations on, and understanding of the broader context of, India’s occupation, settler-colonialism, as well as the systemic Islamophobia, racism, casteism, and majoritarian nationalism. Given [India’s expansionist agenda](#), and the role of the long-unresolved Kashmir issue as a flashpoint in the region, the possibility of war between Pakistan and India looms large on the horizon. Moreover, [recent military tension between India and China](#) at the LAC in North-East of Jammu and Kashmir poses further precarity. Two, possibly three, nuclear-armed powers, going to war, should be absolutely unthinkable; though, unfortunately, might increasingly become a reality. This will have grave repercussions not just for the region at hand but also much further beyond, especially given the fragile ecology of the Himalayas and the second largest cluster of glaciers in the world. The international community must intervene, lift the ongoing siege on up to 14 million Kashmiris, and support the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir as outlined in the UN Charter: the only path to lasting peace and stability in the entire region.

On 14 June 2018, Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights released its [very first report on the serious human rights violations](#) by India and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir, and followed this up with an [update on 8 July 2019](#). Whereas “India rejected the report’s findings and recommendations, accusing the United Nations of violating its ‘sovereignty and territorial integrity’” ([p. 8](#)); unilaterally annulled Article 35A — which reserved, amongst other rights, the right to own immovable property in Jammu and Kashmir solely for its indigenous peoples — despite the explicit and long term protest of all “political groups across the spectrum” in Kashmir ([pp. 10-11](#)); and has yet to allow UN observers and researchers entry into Kashmir, in contravention of the explicit UN recommendations; it seems deeply hypocritical and counterproductive to elect India as a member, temporary or otherwise, of the United Nations Security Council, as if rewarding it for its multiple and flagrant transgressions.

In light of the above, we urge you to hold India to account as per the UNSC resolutions and recommendations, instead of honoring it with a membership in UNSC, and work towards a peaceful and just settlement of the Kashmir issue.

India’s claim of being a “democracy” imperils the actual abstract concept of democracy in the rest of the world. To have an unabashed violator of UNSC resolutions and international legal obligations in a seat at the UNSC is bound to undermine the credibility of the United Nations.

We thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

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The Kashmir Scholars Consultative and Advocacy Network is an interdisciplinary group of scholars of various nationalities engaged in research on the region of Kashmir. Our research on the Kashmir conflict addresses its history, its consequences for the region and beyond, and its possible resolution. It examines the implications for an internationally mediated political solution, and is of relevance to policy makers.

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