

16 December 2019

The Lancet
125 London Wall
London, EC2Y 5AS, UK

RE: Editorial in The Lancet on August 17, 2019 on situation in Kashmir

Dear Editor of *The Lancet*,

We are writing to thank you for the important editorial published in *The Lancet* on August 17, 2019: '[Fear and uncertainty around Kashmir's future](#)'. We are aware of the backlash that you and the *Lancet* are receiving from certain international and British-based medical organisations as a result of your intervention in this issue. As a global and public health organisation, we wanted to show our support for *The Lancet* and the work that the journal does to highlight global political and economic factors that inevitably determine health outcomes.

As Kashmiri health workers have already pointed out in a letter of support to both *The Lancet* and the *BMJ*, the current situation in Kashmir is having, and will continue to have, a large impact on health in the region.

Since the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's revocation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution - which granted a special status to the region of Jammu and Kashmir, giving it the power to have a separate constitution, a state flag and autonomy over the internal administration of the state - [there have been reports](#) of difficulties and delays in the ability to travel to health centres and hospitals. This comes as a result of military blockades and curfew, with the enforced internet lockdown impacting digital access to the national health insurance database.

For over a decade, there have been many reports of the mental health impacts of the occupation and conflict in Jammu and Kashmir - with a markedly [high prevalence of post-traumatic stress and depression](#) associated with unemployment, violence against women, loss of loved ones as a result of the conflict and witnessing violence. More recently, there has been [anecdotal evidence of heightened anxiety, stress, post-traumatic stress and even heart ailments](#) as a result of the increased military presence, arrests and detention and the curfew and lockdown.

Decades of military occupation of Kashmir has led to thousands of deaths and injuries. As your editorial correctly highlights, it has been reported that from mid-2016 to the end of

2018 alone, [1,253 people in the Kashmir Valley had been blinded by the use of pellet-firing shotguns](#) by the Indian security forces.

[A statement by health networks, practitioners, academics, women's rights activists and more, published in August 2019](#), makes clear the political and humanitarian consequences of the decision to revoke parts of Article 370.

To take a stance on or highlight these forces is not and must not be outside of the remit of the wider health community.

Kind regards,

Medact

People's Health Movement UK

People's Health Movement North America