

Indian Archbishop Issues Urgent Call to Prayer Over This Political Crisis

Christians around the world ought to pray for Kashmir as tensions in the region have spiked since Aug. 5, when India removed its long-established “special status,” bringing the India-administered areas of Kashmir into direct control of the central government.

The decision exacerbated India’s already strained relationship with Pakistan and prompted Pakistan’s prime minister to threaten to globalize the issue and alarmingly escalate the situation by stating that “Pakistan would keep all options on the table.”

I’m calling on Indian, Pakistani and all Christians to a simple task that transcends the complexity of the issue and the enmity that has long existed between our countries because of it. Christians ought to pray to Jesus—the “Prince of Peace”—that peace would reign in our countries and in our region as God has called each of us to “seek peace and prosperity” for our countries, according to Jeremiah 29:7. The prophet continues, “Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

And I’m calling them to do so intensely. Since the British partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought three wars over the Kashmir region. Hundreds of thousands of civilians and military officers have died on both sides of the border in armed conflicts and episodes of inter-communal violence. The last thing the region needs is another war, especially when both nations have nuclear weapons.

All of this has been especially complicated in recent years by

cross-border terrorism as Pakistan's prime minister himself recently recognized that 30,000-40,000 terrorists operate on Pakistani soil.

Putting it all together, in just over 25 years over 45,000 people in Jammu & Kashmir have died in cross-border militant encounters between the countries and from terrorist attacks originating in Pakistan. When India cites national security concerns for its decisions in Kashmir, it's not without cause.

Yet, the status-quo situation in Kashmir has long been unsustainable, and by some act of divine providence maybe this disruption could result in a solution as the Indian government and the people of India embrace Kashmiris as fellow citizens of India. That, however, might require a divine miracle, a miracle entirely unlikely if God's people do not pray.

And as they pray for a peaceful and permanent resolution to this intractable conflict, they should keep in mind that the security situation remains tense as curfews are still imposed, as new questions have arisen about the citizenship rights of some people living in Kashmir, and as India's national leadership and judiciary deal and work through the implications of the decision made by the government. They should also pray for Christians, Hindus, Muslims and others whose religious freedom has sometimes been caught up in these political conflicts. Ultimately, Christians should pray that no one will give license to hate in any form, always recognizing the inherent dignity in every human being and their God-given freedom of conscience.

As a Christian leader, and on behalf of the All-India Christian Council, I'm grateful for the generosity and kindness shown by our Christian friends around the world to commit our strong, yet also delicate, region to the hand of almighty God.

May we, as the apostle Paul prayed, have the privilege to

“lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Tim. 2:2b, ESV). {eoa}

Most Rev. Joseph D’Souza *is a Christian theologian, author and human and civil rights activist. He is the founder of Dignity Freedom Network, an organization that advocates for and delivers humanitarian aid to the marginalized and outcastes of South Asia. He is archbishop of the Anglican Good Shepherd Church of India and serves as the president of the All India Christian Council.*