

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon
Minister of State
Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
King Charles Street,
London, SW1A 2AH

28 August 2019

Dear Lord Ahmad

I am writing on behalf of the University and College Union to highlight the deep concerns raised by many of our members about the current situation in Kashmir.

The Indian government's unilateral decision to revoke article 370 of the constitution strips Kashmir of its autonomy, undermines the rights of the Kashmiri people and makes the prospect of a just and peaceful settlement to the conflict in the region even more remote.

It is extremely concerning that the move was accompanied by an unprecedented lockdown that still continues, with strict curfews, phone lines and internet cut, public gatherings banned, and Kashmiri political leaders arrested. This state of siege, which has continued for more than two weeks with only periodic breaks, is a gross violation of the basic rights of the Kashmiri people. As a trade union of educators, we are particularly troubled by the closure of educational institutions and reports of the arrest of academics and students.

We urge the UK government to push the Indian government for an immediate end to the lockdown, release of those who have been arrested, and the restoration of freedom of movement, communication, speech, and assembly in Kashmir. We also call on the UK government to work with both India and Pakistan in seeking a way forward which respects the right of Kashmiris to determine their own future, as affirmed by the United Nations more than seventy years ago.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by the name 'Grady' in a cursive script.

Dr Jo Grady

General Secretary