

Kashmir crisis: Indian and Pakistani leftists say no to new nuclear war threat

Sunday 3 March 2019, by [PRICE Susan](#), [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 1 March 2019).



Anti war protest in Lahore on February 28. Photo: Farooq Tariq.

As tensions escalate between India and Pakistan, the threat of a nuclear conflict hangs over South Asia and the world.

On February 14, the Pakistani-based organisation Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility for a terrorist attack on a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) convoy in the district of Pulwama in Kashmir. Sixty police officers were killed and injured.

Then, on February 26, India launched an air strike on an alleged terrorist training camp in Pakistan. The following day, the Pakistan Air Force shot down two Indian fighter jets over Kashmir.

Socialists in Pakistan and India have responded quickly to the threat of a new war. They have condemned the terrorist attack which sparked this latest aggression, and the war-like responses of both countries' governments.

A demonstration for peace was organised in Lahore in Pakistan on February 28. Farooq Tariq, Awami Workers Party spokesperson told Green Left Weekly that the shooting down of two Indian Air Force planes by Pakistan had escalated the danger of a fully-fledged war.

"Things can get out of control. Two atomic powers going to war can endanger the whole planet," Tariq said.

"We need an international anti-war movement to force the two nations [to stop] before this madness becomes a reality."

He said that social movements, governments in South Asia and the United Nations should demand an end to the escalation of threats and counter-threats.

On February 27, the Communist Party of India, (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation called for a cessation of

hostilities between India and Pakistan, saying the situation had “once again reached a near-war flashpoint”.

It criticised Indian foreign secretary, Vijay Gokhale, who described the Indian response as a “pre-emptive” counter-terror strike and Pakistan’s decision to retaliate.

“We, the people of India, do not want another Pulwama. Neither do we want another war between India and Pakistan.

“We therefore call upon the governments of India and Pakistan to exercise restraint, stop the situation from escalating and step up diplomatic efforts to prevent terrorism and war and ensure lasting peace across the India-Pakistan border.

“We appeal to the peace-loving people of both countries to reject the competitive jingoistic clamour in their respective media and strengthen the prospects of peace.”

An election in India is expected in April or May, and many believe that the Narendra Modi government is escalating talk of war to whip up support for his re-election.

A joint statement by the Jammu Kashmir Awami Workers Party, Radical Socialist (India), Pakistan Trade Unions Defense Campaign and Haqooq Khalq Movement Pakistan (Peoples Rights Movement) on February 23 condemned the terrorist attack in Pulwama.

It called on India to release all evidence relating to the Pulwama attack and for the Pakistani government to take action against Jaish-e-Mohammed.

The groups also condemned Modi’s use of the attack to talk up war, saying that no matter how reprehensible the terrorist attack was, it should not be used as a launch pad for war.

“For the Modi government to declare that the attack in Pulwama is just such an act of war is not only wrong but it is politically speaking extremely dangerous, since it raises the military-political stakes so much higher,” the statement said.

It also called for a solution to the militarisation of Kashmir, where more than 650,000 Indian troops are stationed, even though the Indian government estimates that the number of militants is not more than a few hundred.

“This huge presence of troops is required primarily to monitor and subdue a general population whose alienation and anger against New Delhi has spread wider and deeper than ever before,” the groups said.

“The path to reducing and finally eliminating attacks such as in Pulwama does not lie in belligerent posturing or ‘surgical strikes’ across the border, let alone in escalating military tensions and actions between the two nuclear-armed neighbours...

“The solution of Kashmir lies with the people of Kashmir, not with India and Pakistan. The people of Kashmir on both sides must be the ones who decide the fate of Kashmir.”

Susan Price

P.S.

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