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House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 9, 2019

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street Northwest
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

My Pakistani-American and Kashmiri-American constituents have long brought the issue of Kashmir to my attention. I write today with grave concern over the current situation in Kashmir and Jammu – a potential flashpoint for conflict between nuclear-armed neighbors India and Pakistan, who have a long history of tension and war. Please advise me what steps you intend to take to address this situation for the people of Kashmir and Jammu.

For decades, unrest in Kashmir has been simmering. When I have brought my concerns to experts in the area and members of the administration, it has been made clear to me (and understandably so) that the United States was intensely interested in Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan and the freedom with which terrorists and other criminals crosses that border on a regular basis. The point made to me repeatedly was that there could be no attention paid to the problems in Kashmir on the eastern border with India until the western border was sufficiently addressed.

Now, I am concerned that Prime Minister Modi's recent actions in Kashmir have contributed to tensions that are now higher than ever, and Kashmir must become a major focus of the administration.

Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent visit to the United States demonstrates that our countries are now working together to counter terrorism and other security issues along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan. The Indian government's recent actions in the territories of Jammu and Kashmir demand that we also focus on this area as well.

On Monday August 5, 2019, the Indian government revoked Article 370 of India's Constitution, a provision that has been in place since 1949 to guarantee the state of Jammu and Kashmir a special status with its own constitution, flag, and autonomy over almost all matters other than defense and foreign affairs. In taking this step, the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi cut off Internet and communications services to the state, placed hundreds of political leaders

under house arrest, imposed a curfew on the millions of residents of the state, and deployed tens of thousands of Indian troops into the state, who joined several hundred thousand troops already deployed in one of the most militarized locations in the world.

Hundreds of American citizens visiting the territory have been left stranded with limited options to communicate and leave the territory, and the Kashmiri families of thousands of American citizens remain cut off from communication with their families and under martial law. I am concerned about the safety of our citizens and their families, as well as the human rights of all Kashmiris who are impacted by these measures.

This action by the Indian government risks provoking mass social unrest, as the people of Kashmir have long sought greater autonomy, freedoms, and the opportunity for self-determination. These new restrictions on the autonomy of the state and the rights of Kashmiris could also embolden extremists and terrorists to act.

The April 2019 *New York Times* article, "Under Modi, a Hindu Nationalist Surge Has Further Divided India" stated, "Mr. Modi's supporters say the prime minister and his allies are simply restoring Hinduism to its rightful place at the core of Indian society. They argue that there is nothing wrong with emphasizing India's Hindu history and traditions in a more muscular way." Many experts warn that the Modi government's move could embolden Hindu nationalists to engage in acts of violence and discrimination against India's minority religious groups, including Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs, who are facing increasing attacks throughout the country. I am especially concerned with this action as Eid al-Adha, a significant Islamic holiday, begins tomorrow on August 10.

Please let me know as soon as possible what actions our government intends to take and please advise if I may be of any assistance. We must, as you know, hold true to our values of respecting the human rights of all people, including religious minorities, and we must use our influence to encourage our allies to do the same. We also must do all we can to help prevent a violent confrontation.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress