# Rising India-Pakistan tensions revive fears of UK community unrest



# Rising Tensions in South Asia Threaten UK Communities

As tensions escalate between India and Pakistan, concerns are mounting that the turmoil could spill over into civil unrest within the UK. This apprehension has been articulated by Ayoub Khan, an independent Member of Parliament for Birmingham Perry Barr, who highlighted the distress felt by communities of Pakistani and Indian heritage across Britain. In comments reported by The Daily Telegraph, Khan emphasised the importance of unity and calm amid fears for loved ones affected by the conflict, stating, “It is vital that we do not compare or diminish the relative pain being felt by either community.”

The backdrop to these warnings is not merely a recent flare-up in hostilities. Following the violence that erupted in Leicester and Smethwick during 2022, where shocking scenes featured clashes between predominantly young men after an India-Pakistan cricket match, the UK has been reminded of the fragile nature of communal relations. Reports from that period described how misinformation and incendiary social media posts exacerbated longstanding religious tensions, resulting in vandalism and assaults, with law enforcement making numerous arrests to restore order.

Community leaders are echoing Khan's calls for restraint. Vinod Popat, a convener for the Hindu Community Organisations Group, which encompasses around 50 Hindu groups in Leicester, noted the heightened emotions surrounding international events, stating, “Here in Leicester and the rest of the UK, we need to live in harmony and there has to be cohesion.” This sentiment is critical, as observers fear that any rise in tensions abroad might quickly translate into clashes on British soil.

The broader context of these localised tensions is indicated by significant protests that have taken place in the UK. Just earlier this year, various groups, including Kashmiris and Sikhs, gathered outside Indian diplomatic missions on what they termed "Black Day," condemning India's controversial laws and calling for international intervention concerning human rights in Jammu and Kashmir. Demonstrators have actively pushed for self-determination, a call that resonates deeply within diasporic communities feeling the impact of geopolitical dynamics.

Further, a recent history of protests against Indian policies has added to the potential for unrest. For instance, in October 2023, demonstrations in the UK and Europe commemorated 76 years of alleged Indian occupation in Kashmir while calling for a plebiscite as outlined by United Nations resolutions. The fervour surrounding such events reflects a growing awareness and activism within these communities, yet also raises concerns about escalating tensions within the United Kingdom.

In contrast, earlier protests, such as the pro-Khalistani demonstration in London last July, were noticeably subdued, indicating fluctuations in engagement levels among diasporic communities. This developing dynamic underlines the complexity of the issues at play, as individuals and communities navigate the balance between expressing solidarity for their homelands and ensuring social cohesion within the UK.

The UK government has recognised the potential for international events to disrupt local peace. In May 2023, it commissioned an independent review to analyse the causes of the 2022 Leicester unrest. This review aims to bolster social cohesion and prevent similar occurrences, underscoring a commitment to managing community tensions.

As successive generations of British citizens grapple with their identities amid international crises, the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding becomes increasingly critical. The community leaders’ calls for calm serve as a reminder of the need for empathy in navigating these deeply felt issues, as British Pakistanis, Kashmiris, and Indians alike confront the emotional repercussions of conflict thousands of miles away. Emphasising humanity over division will be paramount in preventing a repeat of past unrest.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2052135/india-pakistan-conflict-could-spark-unrest), [[6]](https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/clash-over-india-pakistan-cricket-match-uk-police-make-47-arrests-to-deter-further-disorder-in-leicester/article65913818.ece)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2052135/india-pakistan-conflict-could-spark-unrest), [[6]](https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/clash-over-india-pakistan-cricket-match-uk-police-make-47-arrests-to-deter-further-disorder-in-leicester/article65913818.ece)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/01/27/massive-anti-india-protest-demos-held-across-britain/), [[4]](https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/10/29/demonstrations-across-uk-europe-mark-kashmir-black-day/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/10/29/demonstrations-across-uk-europe-mark-kashmir-black-day/), [[5]](https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/khalistani-protest-indian-high-commission-london-tricolour-burned-cow-urine-gurcharan-singh-paramjit-singh-pamma-2444219-2023-10-04)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/pro-khalistan-protest-in-london-subdued/article67058156.ece), [[7]](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/uk/uk-orders-review-into-leicester-unrest-after-india-pak-match/articleshow/100540228.cms)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2052135/india-pakistan-conflict-could-spark-unrest), [[7]](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/uk/uk-orders-review-into-leicester-unrest-after-india-pak-match/articleshow/100540228.cms)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2052135/india-pakistan-conflict-could-spark-unrest> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/01/27/massive-anti-india-protest-demos-held-across-britain/> - On January 27, 2023, large-scale protests were held across Britain, marking India's Republic Day as 'Black Day.' Kashmiris, Sikhs, and their allies gathered outside the Indian High Commission in London and the Indian Consulate in Birmingham. They condemned India's draconian laws, such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and Public Safety Act (PSA), and called for international intervention to halt alleged genocide in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir. Protesters emphasized the need for self-determination and criticized India's colonial mindset reflected in these laws.
3. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/pro-khalistan-protest-in-london-subdued/article67058156.ece> - On July 8, 2023, a pro-Khalistan protest outside the Indian High Commission in London was relatively subdued, lasting less than the scheduled 3-3.5 hours. Approximately 35-40 protesters gathered in the rain, a stark contrast to earlier demonstrations. The protest was part of a series of global demonstrations, including those in Melbourne, San Francisco, and Toronto, in response to the killing of Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia on June 18. Protesters displayed banners blaming Indian diplomats for Nijjar's death.
4. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/10/29/demonstrations-across-uk-europe-mark-kashmir-black-day/> - On October 27, 2023, Kashmiris, Pakistanis, and their allies held protests outside Indian missions in the UK and Europe to mark 76 years of alleged Indian occupation of Kashmir. Led by Tehreek-e-Kashmir UK, the demonstrations aimed to remind the international community of the situation in Kashmir. Protesters raised pro-Kashmir and pro-freedom slogans, emphasizing the right to self-determination and calling for a free and fair plebiscite, as outlined in UN resolutions.
5. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/khalistani-protest-indian-high-commission-london-tricolour-burned-cow-urine-gurcharan-singh-paramjit-singh-pamma-2444219-2023-10-04> - On October 2, 2023, Khalistani supporters staged a protest outside the Indian High Commission in London, coinciding with Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary. During the demonstration, Dal Khalsa leader Gurcharan Singh desecrated the Indian Tricolour by pouring cow urine on it. The protesters set fire to the flag, highlighting their opposition to India's policies in Punjab and Kashmir. The incident drew condemnation from various quarters, including the Indian government and diaspora communities.
6. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/clash-over-india-pakistan-cricket-match-uk-police-make-47-arrests-to-deter-further-disorder-in-leicester/article65913818.ece> - In September 2022, following an India-Pakistan cricket match, Leicester witnessed clashes leading to 47 arrests. The unrest resulted in vandalism, assaults, and attacks on places of worship, homes, and vehicles. The Indian High Commission in London condemned the violence against the Indian community and called for protection for those affected. The clashes underscored the potential for international events to escalate into local tensions within the UK.
7. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/uk/uk-orders-review-into-leicester-unrest-after-india-pak-match/articleshow/100540228.cms> - In May 2023, the UK government commissioned an independent review into the civil unrest in Leicester that occurred in August and September 2022, following an India-Pakistan cricket match. The review aimed to establish the facts of the unrest, analyze its causes, and make recommendations to prevent similar events in the future. The panel also sought to strengthen social cohesion locally, highlighting the government's commitment to addressing community tensions.