

Impressum

Ashutosh Vardhana: British Asians Petition for Peace

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

On 14 February 2002 (a few months after the 9/11 2001 attacks), a delegation of the British Stop the War Coalition called on the High Commissions of India and of Pakistan to hand in a petition urging the two governments to resolve their problems by peaceful means. The delegation contained Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and Westerners, and the petition was signed by about 400 members of all communities.

Ashutosh Vardhana: British Asians petition for peace



British Asians Petition for
Peace:
Petitioners outside India House,
London

On Tuesday, 14 February 2002, a delegation of the 'Stop the War Coalition' handed in a petition at the High Commissions of India and of Pakistan, urging both governments to step back from the brink of war, to avoid a 'nuclear conflict that would result in utter devastation for one of the poorest regions of the globe.'

The authors of the petition condemn the attack of 11 September unreservedly. On their website they express 'their sadness and horror at the events of Tuesday, 11th September, 2001, and wish to extend their heartfelt sympathies to all the individuals affected, and to the city of New York.'

The petition argues that, this sadness notwithstanding, war is not a proper response to terrorist attacks and that America, with its war against Afghanistan and other wars it is now planning, sets a bad example to other countries, which India and Pakistan should not follow.

'If governments in south Asia follow the US model in responding to terrorist acts, the region as a whole will be plunged into perpetual strife. Democratic rights and the search for social justice will be further undermined.'

During the last ten years, over 70,000 people have lost their lives in the Kashmir conflict. 'The people of Kashmir must be allowed to democratically determine their own future.' Instead of wasting huge amounts of money on armaments, India and Pakistan should use it for the benefit of ordinary people.

In Britain we must not allow the US-led 'war against terrorism' to divide us on 'communal lines', be they white versus Asian, or Hindu versus Muslim, or Indian versus Pakistani.



Peace Demonstration
© Stop the War Campaign

The petition is supported by about 400 individuals and organisations of all communities, races and religions, including the Southall Black Sisters (who help Asian women in trouble), journalist and broadcaster Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, writer Tariq Ali, Imran Khan (lawyer for the Stephen Lawrence family), Dr Gayasuddin Siddiqui (Chair, Muslim Parliament), Amrit Wilson (of Asian Women Unite), journalist Paul Foot, and Hilary Wainwright (editor of Red Pepper magazine).

The Stop the War Coalition has organised demonstrations against 'The War' (Afghanistan) and further demonstrations are planned. More information can be obtained from their website, <http://www.stopwar.org.uk/>. Their mail address is: Stop the War Coalition, PO Box 3739, London E5-8EJ, 07951-235 915

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