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# *India and Pakistan Agree to Truce on Kashmir Border*

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NEW DELHI — India and Pakistan have declared a cease-fire along their disputed border in Kashmir, a move welcomed with uneasiness among the population in the area, where a series of such agreements have failed in the past.

The cease-fire was agreed to on Tuesday evening. If successful, it would temper border hostilities between nuclear-armed neighbors in a disputed region that has recently witnessed some of its worst violence in years. On Wednesday, a tense calm settled on the border separating the Indian-controlled part of the region, known as Jammu and Kashmir, from the Pakistani-held area.

Civilians displaced by the violence cautiously contemplated returning to their homes on Wednesday, waiting to see whether violence would resume. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced in recent years along the straggling boundary, which stretches for about 1,200 miles. Cross-border shelling has been a weekly part of life.

Eager to restart their lives and return home, many were hopeful that the truce would stick, but not confident.

“For the last six to seven months the firing has been very intense and we can’t live in our village,” Isher Singh, a 72-year-old farmer whose village is about half a mile from the disputed border, said in a telephone interview.

Mr. Singh, like thousands of others, has lived on and off in government-run camps because of the cross-border shelling. His family has lived through decades of violence and survived the three wars India and Pakistan have fought over Kashmir.

“We can’t do our agriculture, we can’t rear our animals and our children can’t go to school,” he said. “Our lives become hell during the firing. We are happy with this cease-fire news and hope it will last.”

The nascent agreement follows a [rare cease-fire announced](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/17/world/asia/india-kashmir-cease-fire-ramadan.html) by the Indian Army in Kashmir for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which ends mid-June. That cease-fire is the first Ramadan truce in 18 years.

On Tuesday night, India and Pakistan’s top military commanders brokered the new truce via a telephone hotline, promising to restore “in letter and spirit” a 2003 truce agreement, according to near-identical statements released by both sides. That agreement fostered several years of peace but gradually foundered, with cross-border violence re-emerging more fully in 2013.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars along the disputed border in Kashmir, which both countries rushed to capture after they were partitioned in 1947. India claims Pakistan supports violent separatists in the region, while Pakistan accuses its southern neighbor of committing rights violations in its rule over the predominately Muslim population there.

Last year was the most violent since 2003, according to Happymon Jacob, an associate professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi who monitors the border.

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in India in 2014, the Indian military escalated the Kashmir violence by using high-caliber weapons, Professor Jacob said.

Last year, Pakistan reported 1,970 cease-fire violations while India reported 970, according to Professor Jacob, who added that India was “disproportionately” shelling across the border. This year was on track to be even more violent, with more than 1,000 violations occurring in the first six months of 2018, according to [independent monitors](http://indopakconflictmonitor.org/yearwise_cfv.php?year=2018).

But with the truce agreement happening in the absence of larger peace talks, observers are not optimistic that it will stick.

“The only reason that 2003 cease-fire agreement survived that long was because it was backed by a peace dialogue,” Professor Jacob said, noting attacks in 2008 in Mumbai, India, and at the Indian Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, had derailed those peace talks. India accuses Pakistani-backed militants of orchestrating both attacks, which Pakistan denies.

“In the absence of a peace dialogue accompanying it, I don’t think that this cease-fire agreement will survive,” he added.

Instead, Professor Jacob, like other analysts, believes the truce is being pursued by Mr. Modi’s government as a way to strengthen its alliance with the local government in Jammu and Kashmir, which has grown shakier in recent years as violence worsened.

The popularity of the local government has waned in part because of its alliance with Mr. Modi’s governing Bharatiya Janata Party, which has been increasingly seen as representing Hindu sectarianism.

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