

## Lahore Resolution 1940

**L**ahore Resolution adopted at the general session of the Muslim League. In 1940 Mohammed Ali Jinnah called a general session of the All India Muslim League in Lahore to discuss the situation that had arisen due to the outbreak of the Second World War and the Government of India joining the war without taking the opinion of the Indian leaders, and also to analyze the reasons that led to the defeat of the Muslim League in the general election of 1937 in the Muslim majority provinces.

Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy left with a small group of Muslim League workers for Lahore on 19 March 1940. Ak Fazlul Huq led the Bengal Muslim League contingent and reached Lahore on 22 March.

Jinnah, in his speech, criticized the Congress and the nationalist Muslims, and espoused the Two-Nation Theory and the reasons for the demand for separate Muslim homelands. His arguments caught the imagination of the Muslim masses. Sikandar Hayat Khan, the chief minister of the Punjab, drafted the original Lahore Resolution, which was placed before the Subject Committee of the All India Muslim League for discussion and amendments. The resolution, radically amended by the Subject Committee, was moved in the general session by Fazlul Huq on 23 March and was supported by Chowdhury Khaliquzzaman and other Muslim leaders. The Lahore Resolution ran as follows:

*The areas where the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the Northwestern and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'independent states' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.*

The resolution was adopted on 24 March with great enthusiasm. The Hindu Press dubbed it as the "Pakistan Demand", after the scheme invented by Rahmat Ali, an Indian Muslim living at Cambridge. The 1940 resolution nowhere mentioned Pakistan and in asking for 'independent states' the spokesmen of the League were far from clear what was intended. The Hindu press supplied to the Muslim leadership a concerted slogan, which immediately conveyed to them the idea of a state. It would have taken long for the Muslim leaders to explain the Lahore Resolution and convey its real meaning and significance to the Muslim masses. Years of labor of the Muslim leaders to propagate its full importance amongst the masses was shortened by the Hindu press in naming the resolution as the 'Pakistan Resolution'. By emphasizing the idea of Pakistan the Hindu press succeeded in converting a wordy and clouded lawyer's formula into a clarion call.

The Muslims of Bengal, who were searching for an identity throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, finally found it in the Lahore Resolution. The Lahore Resolution gave them a sense of nationhood. Henceforth the dominant theme in Muslim politics was not complaint against Hindu injustice, but a demand for separate political existence.

On 15 April 1941 the Lahore Resolution was incorporated as a creed in the constitution of the All-India Muslim League in its Madras session. It continued to be the League's creed until its dissolution after the independence of Pakistan in 1947.

Indeed, from 1940 onward, Pakistan was the great talking point of the Indian independence debate. When the Cabinet Mission arrived in India in March 1946 to consult Indian leaders and to help facilitate self-government, the All India Muslim League decided to hold a three day convention of the members of the central and provincial legislatures belonging to the Muslim League on 7 April at Delhi to reiterate their 'Pakistan Demand'. The Working Committee of the Muslim League had appointed a Sub Committee with Choudhury Khaliqzaman, Hasan Ispahani, and others to draft a resolution to be placed before the convention. Choudhury Khaliqzaman prepared a draft of the resolution, which was discussed with other members and, after some minor changes here and there, was approved by the Sub Committee and then by the Subject Committee. This resolution made a fundamental departure from the original Lahore Resolution in using the word 'state' in the singular replacing the term 'states'.

The resolution that was placed before the Delhi Convention of Muslim Legislators in 1946 included the principle that the zones comprising Bengal and Assam in the Northeast and the Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan in the Northwest of India, namely Pakistan zones, where the Muslims are in a dominant majority, be

constituted into a sovereign independent 'state' and that an unequivocal undertaking be given to implement the establishment of Pakistan without delay. The committee did not question the change.

The resolution was proposed in the open session by Suhrawardy and seconded by Choudhury Khaliqzaman. Abul Hashem claimed that he raised the voice of protest against the resolution on a point of order in the Subject Committee on the previous day when Jinnah placed it before the committee. He maintained that the draft resolution looked like an amendment of the Lahore Resolution though it had not been said or it was not placed in the form of amendment of the Lahore Resolution. He claimed to have argued that the Lahore Resolution envisaged two sovereign states in Northeastern and Northwestern zones of India, and the Resolution was accepted by the All-India Muslim League in its Madras session of 1941 as the creed of that political party. He claimed to have insisted that the Convention of the Muslim League legislators was not competent to alter or modify the contents of the Lahore Resolution.

Jinnah at first took the plural-'s' of the Lahore Resolution as an 'obvious printing mistake'. But when, on Abul Hashim's insistence, the original minute book was checked, Jinnah found under his own signature the plural-'s'. Abul Hashim claimed that he had suggested for erasing the word 'one' and replace it with 'a'. Jinnah is said to have accepted Abul Hashim's suggestion. According to Hashim, Suhrawardy placed in the open session of the Convention a modified form of the resolution on Jinnah's advice.

It may, therefore, appear that even after the Delhi Convention of the Muslim Legislators Jinnah was not thinking in terms of amending the Lahore Resolution. The Subject Committee presided over by Jinnah seemingly accepted the constitutional position that the Convention of the Muslim Legislators was not the forum competent to amend the Lahore Resolution. Nor could Jinnah amend it after the General Election in the country in which the Muslim League contested on the basis of the Lahore Resolution. He assured the Muslim League leaders from Bengal who met him on a deputation that the Lahore Resolution was not amended. At his Malbari Hill House on 30 July 1946 Jinnah encouraged Abul Hashim to work on the basis of the Lahore Resolution.

Cabinet Mission arrived in India on 24 March 1946 to make negotiations with the recognized party leaders in India towards self-government for India. Comprised of three members of the British Cabinet - Secretary of State Pethick Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps

and AV Alexander - the mission proposed a two-tiered federal plan, which was expected to maintain national unity while conceding the largest measure of regional autonomy. There was to be a federation of the provinces and the states with the federal centre controlling only defence, foreign affairs and communications. At the same time, individual provinces could form regional unions to which they could surrender, by mutual agreement, some of the powers.

The existing provincial assemblies were to be grouped into three sections while electing the constituent assembly: Section 'A' for the Hindu majority provinces, Section 'B' and 'C' for the Muslim majority provinces of the Northwest and Northeast (including Assam). The sections would have the power to set up intermediate level executives and legislatures of their own.

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