

# VISA POWER: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON DEPORTATION OF BRITISH LABOUR MP DEBBIE ABRAHAMS OVER KASHMIR

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India's Foreign Policy evolution and changes

The government has [explained its decision to detain and deport British Labour MP Debbie Abrahams](#), saying that she had attempted to enter India on an “invalid visa”, as the government had revoked her e-business visa three days prior to her travel. It also seems clear that the decision to revoke the visa was prompted by her frequent criticism of India on the issue of human rights in Jammu and Kashmir, and a proclivity towards echoing Pakistan’s line on the issue. After the government’s amendment to Article 370 in August, Ms. Abrahams, who is the Chairperson of the U.K.’s All-Party Parliamentary Group on Kashmir, had stepped up her campaign, and raised the issue of J&K in the British Parliament as well. The government has not explained, however, how someone it considers so inimical to Indian interests received a one-year business visa in the first place in October 2019, and why it took four months to cancel it. Eventually, its [reaction to her arrival in New Delhi](#), detaining and questioning her before deporting her was nothing short of ham-handed. To be clear, the government is well within its rights to deny entry to anyone that it desires to. However, if its plan was to avoid public criticism of its actions in J&K or of its democratic values, then its treatment of the MP has only ended up having spotlighted its actions even more. Parallels will also be made to the response to [criticism from the U.S. Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal](#), who like Ms. Abrahams has family ties with India, and co-sponsored a House resolution critical of India on J&K. External Affairs Minister [S. Jaishankar, in Washington in December, cancelled a meeting](#) with the influential House Foreign Affairs Committee as a snub to Ms. Jayapal, instead of trying to engage her at the meeting. The government is apparently banking on the fact that Ms. Jayapal and Ms. Abrahams are from Opposition parties, and hence it will not face adverse consequences from the Trump administration or the Johnson government.

Where governments like those in Turkey and Malaysia have themselves been critical, India’s response has been equally sharp: the [démarche to the Turkish Ambassador](#) this week and travel advisories issued earlier to Indians travelling to Turkey, or the trade restrictions on palm oil imports, most of which are from Malaysia, are notable examples. New Delhi’s anger over [negative comments by Turkish President Erdoan](#) or [Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad](#) on India’s “internal affairs” would seem more valid if it was not at the same time organising groups of envoys to visit J&K and encouraging them to express their positive opinions on the situation there. In the same vein, the boycott or deportation of politicians, visa denials to foreign journalists, all appear to be a part of a pattern of whimsical behaviour not suited to a democracy like India that prides in its traditions of openness and debate.

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