

THE FORGOTTEN MAP: TRACING PRE-1947 KASHMIRI SETTLEMENTS ACROSS PAKISTAN



By Munir Dar

Toronto, Canada. June 23, 2026. (LPC). For more than a century, Kashmiri families have lived, worked, and contributed to the social and economic fabric of the territories that now form Pakistan. Yet their presence deep, historic, and culturally distinct has rarely been documented in official records. A new analysis by the Kashmir-Origin Legal Identity, Documentation & Representation Foundation (KLIRF) reconstructs, for the first time, a district-wise map of Kashmiri settlements before the Partition of 1947, revealing a widespread but largely invisible demographic footprint.

This research not only charts where Kashmiri communities lived but also provides a population projection model showing how these undocumented lineages have grown over nearly a century. The findings challenge long-held assumptions about the scale and distribution of Kashmiri-origin populations in Pakistan and highlight the urgent need for formal recognition.

A Historical Landscape Hidden in Plain Sight

Long before the creation of Pakistan, Kashmiris migrated in significant numbers to British India. Economic hardship, political repression, and the collapse of traditional industries particularly shawl weaving pushed many families to seek livelihoods in Punjab, Karachi, NWFP, and Baluchistan. These migrations intensified between 1850 and 1947, forming dense clusters of Kashmiri-origin communities across the region.

KLIRF's district-wise reconstruction identifies the following major settlement zones:

Rawalpindi Division: The Largest Pre-Partition Hub

Rawalpindi emerges as the single largest Kashmiri settlement outside the princely state. Areas such as Kashmiri Bazaar, Banni, and the Raja Bazaar belt hosted thousands of Kashmiri artisans, traders, and military labourers. The concentration here is classified as **very high**, reflecting both economic opportunity and proximity to the Grand Trunk Road.

Sialkot and Lahore: Artisan and Urban Centres

Sialkot's inner-city mohallas and artisan quarters were home to Kashmiri leather workers, sports goods craftsmen, and weavers. Lahore's Kashmiri Mohalla, Bhatti Gate, and Mochi Gate formed another major cluster, with Kashmiris active in trade, education, and urban services. Both cities show **very high** settlement intensity.

Gujrat, Jhelum, and Lyallpur: Rural and Semi-Urban Migration

In Gujrat and Kharian including **Sehna, Lalamusa, and surrounding villages** Kashmiri families engaged in agriculture and weaving. Jhelum's riverine villages and GT Road mohallas also hosted medium-high concentrations of Kashmiri labourers and farmers. Lyallpur (now Faisalabad), a British canal colony, attracted Kashmiri agricultural workers and later power-loom labourers.

Karachi and NWFP: Trade and Port Labour

Karachi's Old City, Kharadar, and Mithadar saw steady Kashmiri migration in the early 20th century, particularly among port labourers and traders. In NWFP, Peshawar and Kohat hosted shawl-weaver mohallas and bazaar clusters, reflecting the region's historic textile links with Kashmir.

Quetta: A Smaller but Significant Presence

In Baluchistan, Kashmiri labourers settled in railway and cantonment quarters in Quetta, forming a modest but notable community.

KLIRF notes that this district-wise mapping can be converted into a GIS-based shapefile or GeoJSON dataset, enabling policymakers and researchers to visualise settlement intensity across regions.

How Many Were There? Reconstructing a Lost Population

Because British India did not record "Kashmiri" as a census category, the size of these communities has remained unknown. KLIRF's demographic reconstruction uses historical migration patterns, occupational clusters, and district-level settlement histories to estimate the undocumented Kashmiri-origin population.

The findings are striking.

Base Population (1930): 0.70–0.90 million

KLIRF estimates that by 1930, approximately **0.80 million** Kashmiris were living in what is now Pakistan. This figure represents families who migrated over decades but were never registered as State Subjects under the 1927 law of Jammu & Kashmir.

Population Growth Over Time

Using a conservative annual growth rate of **2.2%**, consistent with historical South Asian Muslim fertility, KLIRF projects the following population trajectory:

Year	Projected Population (Millions)	Notes
1930	0.80	Base estimate
1947	≈ 1.10	Pre-Partition peak
1960	≈ 1.45	First post-independence generation
1980	≈ 2.20	Urbanisation accelerates
2000	≈ 3.30	Third generation emerges
2024	≈ 4.8 – 6.2	Current estimate

A Hidden Population of Millions

KLIRF summarises the central finding as follows:

“KLIRF estimates that between **4.8 and 6.2 million** Pakistanis today are of undocumented Kashmiri origin whose families migrated pre 1947 and were never recorded as State Subjects of Jammu & Kashmir” post 1947 after independence of Pakistan.

This makes the undocumented Kashmiri-origin population one of the largest unrecognised ethnocultural groups in Pakistan.

Why This Matters

The absence of documentation has long-term consequences. These communities:

- are not recognised as “Kashmiri” in Pakistan’s census or NADRA systems
- cannot access AJK’s State Subject framework
- have no representation in Kashmir-related policymaking
- lack visibility in academic, political, and administrative discourse

KLIRF argues that without formal recognition, a significant part of Kashmir’s historical diaspora remains erased from institutional memory.

A Call for Recognition

KLIRF’s research lays the groundwork for a broader national conversation on identity, belonging, and historical justice. By mapping pre-1947 Kashmiri settlements and projecting their population growth, the organisation aims to restore visibility to a community that has been overlooked for generations.

The next step, KLIRF says, is policy reform including census recognition, genealogical documentation, and AJK–Pakistan coordination to ensure that the descendants of these early migrants are finally acknowledged.