

## **The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, Kashmir**



artwork – apdp office, hyderpora, Srinagar, Kashmir

**a provisional biography  
of a journey towards justice  
for the enforced disappeared**



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Some information in the biography has been extracted from Aatina Malik's interview with Advocate Parvez Imroz of the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society in November 2017.

The biography has drawn on the following texts:

Ather Zia's ethnography *Resisting Disappearance: Military Occupation & Women's Activism in Kashmir* (2019)

Shubh Mathur's ethnography, *The Human Toll of the Kashmir Conflict: Grief and Courage in a South Asian Borderland* (2016)

Iffat Fatima's *Khoon Diy Baarav* (2015)

Other academic work, human rights reports, and news reports which document and disseminate APDP's struggle for justice have been cited where relevant. These sources have contributed to the writing of this biography.

APDP wishes to thank all those who have supported APDP over the years in its formation, and now for its continuing struggle.



Hamiya Jan, niece of Mohamad Abdullah Dar (enforced disappeared by Border Security Force, 1990)  
APDP Protest, Pratap Park, 30 August, 2015.



Parveena Ahangar, APDP Protest, Pratap Park, 30 August, 2015.  
International Day of Enforced Disappearances, Srinagar.

photo credit: Goldie Osuri

## **The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, Kashmir (APDP) an introduction**

There are reportedly over 8,000 cases of enforced disappearances in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir. These disappearances began in the 1990s even before the enactment and implementation of The Jammu & Kashmir Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in September 1990, which provides impunity for India's armed forces.

The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons, Kashmir (APDP) was co-founded in 1994 by Parveena Ahangar with the support of legal professionals and activists as well as the victim families of enforced disappearances. Parvez Imroz, who now heads the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), was part of this co-founding process. APDP is the oldest human rights movement and organisation in Kashmir. This biography focuses on the APDP led by Parveena Ahangar.

Parveena Ahangar's son, Javaid Ahmed Ahangar was enforced disappeared between the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> of August and the early morning hours of August 18, 1990. Given this catastrophic event, Parveena Ahangar embarked on journey to search for her son, a journey which led to the formation of APDP and the formation of a movement against enforced disappearances in Kashmir. This biography places this story in the broader political context of Kashmir, discusses the importance of memory for the movement, and the gendered and international context of this movement. The biography ends with some narrative testimonies from APDP members.

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How can I spend my journey in the scorching sun?  
 Spread the shade of my beloved's remembrance on my head  
 - Ahmad Faraz

The words above accompany the 2015 postcard sketch of Javaid Ahmed Ahangar, Parveena Ahangar's son. The memory of the loved one is the shade that protects those who search. This evocative sentiment of love expresses a bond between the disappeared and the ones who search. The journey in the scorching sun continues for Parveena Ahangar.



Javaid Ahmed Ahangar, postcard sketch

Haunting poems like the words above embroider postcards, calendars and posters that APDP make every year for the enforced disappeared in order to ensure not only that they are remembered, but that the quest for accountability and justice from the Indian state continues.



apdp 2018 calendar, artwork by Rollie Mukherjee

Ather Zia argues that these expressions of 'deeply emotional and haunting mourning' are part of an 'affective law', one that sheds light on state practices of violence (2019: 35). These postcards, calendars, posters, poems, the protests held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of every

month ensure an ethics of memory and of witnessing in a context where the experience of state violence also means an experience of an attempted erasure of the act of violence itself. Memory, therefore, is an integral part of resistance against state violence in Kashmir. Hence memory and justice are crucial to APDP's activities of remembering, protest, and the demand for accountability for human rights violations, crimes against humanity, and war crimes committed by the Indian state.

As Zia states, 'APDP's activism becomes a resistant memory against amnesia forced by a repressive regime' (2019: 10). APDP is iconic for its peaceful monthly protests particularly against enforced disappearances, and more generally against state violence.

Enforced disappearance is deemed a crime against humanity. The International Commission of Jurists has defined enforced disappearance as a 'complex crime' involving two elements: 'deprivation of liberty by state' or state-authorised agents; and 'refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty' or 'concealment of the fate of the disappeared person' (ICJ 2015: 10). Families of those disappeared, therefore, are victims themselves.

The United Nations' (UN) *Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance* (18 December 1992) considers enforced disappearances as violating fundamental human rights. Directed toward state use of the technique of enforced disappearances, the UN states that an enforced disappearance occurs when: '*persons are arrested, detained or abducted against their will or otherwise deprived of their liberty by officials of different branches or levels of Government, or by organized groups or private individuals acting on behalf of, or with the support, direct or indirect, consent or acquiescence of the Government, followed by a refusal to disclose the fate or whereabouts of the persons concerned or a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of their liberty, which places such persons outside the protection of the law.*'<sup>1</sup>

The very definition of enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity was produced through research with the families of enforced disappearances in the Chilean context, and that definition is now universally applicable (ICJ 2015: 9-10). Although India is signatory to the *UN Human Rights International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance*, it has not ratified this obligation.

As a crime against humanity, state directed enforced disappearances have multiple effects. Those who lose family members often lose their means of livelihood. APDP is a distinctive collective, because it engages not only in documenting human rights violations, but also supports the livelihood struggles of victim-families of the enforced disappeared. APDP engages and organises protests and generates local and transnational solidarity networks for victim-families through collaborations with students, academics, filmmakers, musicians, writers, journalists, and human rights lawyers. These solidarity networks include those who have supported APDP long-term as well as at different phases of its formation. Some have made films, written books and even songs addressing

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<sup>1</sup> For the full text, see <<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/47/a47r133.htm>>

the struggle of APDP, with APDP emerging as a resource for these expressions of solidarity.

One of the earliest attempts to document enforced disappearances in Kashmir is in the form of a book *Did They Vanish in Thin Air? A Book on Enforced Disappearances in JK* (2001) by M. Zahirudin. The book was written in close consultation with Parveena Ahangar. Two recent ethnographies have offered analyses of APDP's unique and distinctive approach in its quest for justice, Ather Zia's *Resisting Disappearance: Military Occupation & Women's Activism in Kashmir* (2019) and Shubh Mathur's *The Human Toll of the Kashmir Conflict: Grief and Courage in a South Asian Borderland* (2016). APDP's 9-year collaboration with filmmaker Iffat Fatima resulted in the award-winning film, *Khoon Diy Baarav* or *Blood Leaves its Trail* (2015), which showcases how women, part of the APDP collective, assert their quest for justice. Other films which emerged from this continuing collaboration are *Where Have You Hidden My New Crescent Moon* (2009), a tribute to Mughal Mase and her relentless search for her only son Nazir Ahmed Teli, disappeared on September 1, 1990 by the Indian Armed Forces. *The Dear Disappeared* (2018) is a telling documentary on the complete lack of accountability and justice for the enforced disappearance of Fayaz Ahmad Beigh, a filmmaker photographer in the Kashmir university in 1990.

Local and international news-reports often detail APDP's struggles for justice. APDP's solidarity activities reveal a creative approach to the principles of human rights in the quest for justice.

APDP's journey is a continuing one. Therefore, this document is necessarily a provisional biography. What we hope to do is give readers a glimpse of this journey and locate it in the wider frame of Kashmir's political history and ongoing human rights violations. Such a context gives a sense of the determined emotional, psychological and physical energy it took to form APDP and subsequently for APDP to continue to resist state violence and intimidation.

## II. Political Context

The brief history of Kashmir outlined here provides a context for APDP's relentless struggle for justice and accountability. Kashmir, in this biography, is shorthand for Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir.

On August 5, 2019, the Indian-administered state of Jammu and Kashmir was bifurcated and transformed into two union territories by the Indian state.<sup>2</sup> This is a further step in Kashmir's history of denied sovereignty and political self determination.

Kashmir's current denied sovereignty can be traced to the formation of the princely state by the British East India Company through sale of the Kashmir region to the Dogra general Maharajah Gulab Singh in the aftermath of the Anglo-Sikh Wars of the 1800s. The Dogra

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<sup>2</sup>See Deshmane, A. 2019. 'Kashmir: Scrapping Article 370 "Unconstitutional", "Deceitful" Says Legal Expert A.G. Noorani.' <[https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/kashmir-article-370-scrapping-constitutional-expert-reacts-noorani\\_in\\_5d47e58de4b0aca341206135](https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/kashmir-article-370-scrapping-constitutional-expert-reacts-noorani_in_5d47e58de4b0aca341206135)>

regime entailed severe economic, social, and political repression for Kashmiri Muslims, in particular (Rai 2004). The struggle against the repressive Dogra monarchy in Kashmir began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued alongside the movement for freedom from British rule in India.

At the time of the independence of India and Pakistan in August 1947, the Dogra Maharajah Hari Singh delayed accession to either country. The communal violence of the newly created India and Pakistan ‘spilled into Kashmir’s Jammu Province’ where 200,000 Muslims were killed, an act ‘endorsed’ by the Maharajah (Zia 2019: 56).

The Maharajah was faced with an uprising in Poonch against his rule. The rebels succeeded in declaring a provisional Independent or Azad Kashmir government (Zia 2019: 56). Given the support for the Poonch uprising by tribal militia from the newly-found state of Pakistan, and the proclamation of independent or Azad Kashmir on October 24, 1947, the Maharajah hurriedly acceded to the Indian state on October 26, 1947 (Lamb 1997; Schofield 2010; Snedden 2015; Zia 2019).

With the signing of the instrument of accession, the Indian Armed Forces landed in Kashmir and the first Indo-Pak war over Kashmir was fought between 1947-1948. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1949, the United Nations negotiated a ceasefire between the two warring nations. A ceasefire line was drawn across the state of Jammu and Kashmir with three quarters of the region controlled by India and the rest by Pakistan. The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution which called for a fair and impartial plebiscite for Kashmiri political self-determination. Subsequent resolutions until 1957 re-iterated this stance. To date, the promised plebiscite has not been held. Instead, the Indian state consolidated its control over Jammu and Kashmir by incorporating Article 370 in the Indian constitution. Article 370 of the Indian constitution gave Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir relative autonomy with Indian control extending over Kashmir’s defence, foreign affairs, and communications. Over the years, the autonomy of the state of Jammu and Kashmir had been severely eroded by what Haley Duschinski and Shrimoyee Nandini Ghosh (2017) have termed ‘occupational constitutionalism’ or occupation through India’s constitutional moves. Kashmir’s autonomy was finally revoked through the nullification of Article 370 in August 2019.

From 1947 on, the tyranny and violence of persisting political repression and military occupation by the Indian state and its comprador governments, referred to as *zulm* in Kashmiri collective memory fuelled the desire for *azadi* (freedom). In the 1990s, faced with an armed uprising, the Indian state dissolved the Jammu and Kashmir state legislative assembly, declared emergency and imposed centrally-administered governor’s rule. Governor Jagmohan’s era witnessed sweeping arrests, crackdowns, curfews, raids, rapes and massacres. These were made with impunity after the declaration of Kashmir as a disturbed area through the Jammu & Kashmir Armed Forces Special Powers Act (J&K AFSPA - 1990). The Act includes power to arrest and enter property without warrant, and to shoot any person believed to be acting in contravention of any law or order. AFSPA effectively unleashed a culture of impunity for India’s armed forces in Kashmir.

During this period, thousands of young and old men were picked up during night raids or in broad day light in front of families, relatives and sometimes other civilian witnesses, and were never seen again. The police often refused to entertain complaints against disappearances, and even if some cases against enforced disappearance were filed and heard in the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir, permission was never given by the Central government to prosecute



these cases. As Ather Zia states, enforced disappearances became ‘a means for staging and implementing the Indian military’s hold over Kashmir’ (2019: 10). The formation of APDP as a powerful movement of victim-families began to expose ‘the Indian governments’ policies to control Kashmiri dissent’ (2019: 10).

In this sense, it must be said that the Indian state has held Kashmir in a state of siege since the 1990s. Two United Nations’ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Kashmir reports published in [2018](#) and [2019](#) detail the large-scale, human rights violations in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir for three decades. The siege is ongoing, but has gained intensity since August 2019. Numbers of the half a million Indian armed and paramilitary forces that occupied Kashmir since the late 1980s were increased to over a million troops. The increase preceded the Indian government’s revocation of Article 370 (effectively removing the state’s semi-autonomous status and bifurcating the state into two union territories). The revocation of Article 370 alongside the Jammu and Kashmir Land Reorganisation Act 2019 is an attempt to transform Kashmir’s status as an international dispute into an ‘internal’ issue and change the demography of Kashmir which currently has a Muslim majority. The bifurcation and annexation of Kashmir is legally and constitutionally untenable<sup>3</sup> and an attempt to undermine Kashmir’s history of resistance and denied sovereignty. It may take some time to document and understand the extent of the catastrophic effects of the 2019 siege.<sup>4</sup>

### III. Parveena’s Journey - APDP’s Formation

*‘I went to the villages, to the forests, to the mountains, to find each one who has a sorrow like mine.’*

-- Parveena Ahangar (Mathur 2016: 69)

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<sup>3</sup>See Deshmane, A. 2019. ‘Kashmir: Scrapping Article 370 “Unconstitutional”, “Deceitful” Says Legal Expert A.G. Noorani.’ <[https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/kashmir-article-370-scrapping-constitutional-expert-reacts-noorani\\_in\\_5d47e58de4b0aca341206135](https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/kashmir-article-370-scrapping-constitutional-expert-reacts-noorani_in_5d47e58de4b0aca341206135)>

<sup>4</sup> The following are six reports from five fact-finding missions since the August 2019 siege: Jean Dreze, Kavita Krishnan, Maimoona Mollah & Vimal Bhai 2019, *Caged Kashmir*, 14 August

<<https://www.nchro.org/index.php/2019/08/14/kashmir-caged-a-fact-finding-report-by-jean-dreze-kavita-krishnan-maimoona-mollah-and-vimal-bhai/>>

National Federation of Indian Women, Pragatisheel Mahila Sangathan Delhi, and Muslim Women’s Forum 2019, *Women’s Voice: Fact-finding report on Kashmir*, 24 September

<<http://en.maktoobmedia.com/2019/09/24/full-text-womens-voice-fact-finding-report-on-kashmir>>;

Women against Sexual Violence and State Repression 2019, *Zulm, Zakhm, Azaadi. . . The Voices of Kashmiri Women*, 5 October

<https://wssnet.org/2019/10/05/zulm-zakhm-azaadi-the-voices-of-kashmiri-women/>; Anirudh Kala, Brinelle D’Souza, Revati Laul & Shabnam Hashmi 2019, #KashmirCivilDisobedience: Trauma, Resistance, Resilience, Two Months On, 12 October

<<https://kashmirscholars.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/kashmir-civil-disobedience-a-citizens-report.pdf>>;

Nitya Ramakrishnan & Nandini Sundar 2019, “Go back to India and cover every statue of Gandhi so that he doesn’t have to face this shame”: Kashmiris mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gandhi’s birthday with *Satyagraha*’, 14 October <<https://kashmirscholars.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/nitya-nandini-report-on-kashmir-public.pdf>>

Mihir Desai et. al 2019, *Imprisoned Resistance: 5<sup>th</sup> August and its aftermath*, 31 October

<http://www.pucl.org/sites/default/files/reports/Imprisoned%20Resistance-final%20for%20dissemination.pdf>

APDP's emergence is the story of an effort to collectivize individual suffering in relation to the experience of enforced disappearance. Discussing the Palestinian experience, Nadera Shalhoub Kevorkian (2014) has argued that it is important to take account of the experience of suffering not as an individual social phenomenon but as a collective political one in the context of state violence. The history of the formation of APDP as a movement can be traced by foregrounding the travails and the transformations in the life of one of its members and its leader – Parveena Ahangar – fondly known as *jiji* to the other members of the collective. She is also a Kashmiri icon, known as the 'Iron Lady of Kashmir.' Parveena Ahangar, transformed a traumatic experience of state violence into a gendered resistance against that violence. Parveena Ahangar's story is one that reflects the life stories of other members of the collective. As Iffat Fatima's film *Khoon Diy Baarav* (2015) shows, APDP's members form a crescendo of women's voices battling against enforced disappearances and state violence.

Parveena's ordeal began on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, 1990, when her 17 year-old son Javaid Ahmed Ahangar (listed as Javid in court documents) was abducted by the National Security Guards (NSG), a specialised counter-insurgency force drawn from the Indian Army, at 2 a.m. in a night raid on Dhobi Mohalla in Batamaloo, Srinagar.

This was the beginning of the armed uprising/ Tehreek against the Indian state in Kashmir. The uprising had popular support almost throughout the valley. The brutal repression by the Indian state in the form of prolonged curfews, night raids /crackdowns, enforced disappearances and torture characterised the experience of ordinary civilian Kashmiris (Coll 1990). Like other neighborhoods of Srinagar, Batamaloo too experienced night raids and crackdowns where young boys and men were picked up, taken away, and many never to be found. August 18, marks the date when by her own account, Parveena 'went mad with grief' and began searching everywhere for her abducted son Javaid.

The sense of the vulnerability of a young mother going mad with grief as she searched for her son is gut-wrenching. Yet it is that vulnerability which drove Parveena. In the film *Khoon Diy Baarav* (2015), Parveena's pain at the disappearance of her son is palpable as the camera follows her to Dhobi Mohalla from where Javaid was taken away. Parveena says, "that night I dreamt, a dog bit me. I am wounded but there is no blood, just the bruise."

In this state of grief, Parveena was still hopeful: 'My son is innocent, 'he will be released.' She began looking for him, from police station to police station, army cantonments, to hospitals, to morgues. Days to weeks to months passed as she traversed through a network of detention centres, places where people were tortured. She contacted people who might have access to the Indian military establishment, met officials, members of Indian parliament, and the Jammu & Kashmir legislature. She did not find Javaid anywhere, but she managed to gather some information about him.

The Superintendent of Police (SP) at the Police Control Room, Srinagar, Bashir Ahmad Dar, informed her that her son had been taken to the Army Hospital at Badami Bagh (BB) Cantonment for treatment. The SP provided her a police vehicle, an escort and a gate pass to get there. Parveena went to the army hospital on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, 1990. She recounts, 'it was full of boys groaning and writhing in pain.' She was shown a person who was someone else and not her son Javaid.

She continued looking for him - the official machinery of police, army, bureaucrats and members of parliament were giving her false information and false hope. Parveena felt

dispirited, helpless and hopeless. At this point the SP Control Room, Bashir Ahmad Dar, who had facilitated her visit to the army hospital, advised her to go to court.

At a time when there were no mechanisms to address human rights violations which were taking place on a massive scale in Kashmir, the local lawyers were supportive of the victims and their struggle. Parveena began meeting some of these lawyers. Advocates Ishaq Qadri and Zafar Shah helped Parveena's family file a *habeas corpus* petition before the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir on March 7, 1991. Details of the Right to Information (RTI) petitions as well as habeas corpus petitions filed by Parveena's family in Javaid's case can be found in the *alleged perpetrators: Stories of Impunity in Jammu and Kashmir* report listed under 'Case No. 6' (2012: 25 -26).

After the second habeas corpus petition alongside the first, the High Court ordered a judicial inquiry on October 3, 1991 by the Additional District Judge, Srinagar. As the *alleged perpetrators* report notes, the report of the judicial inquiry was 'submitted before the High Court on 12 March 1992 and indicted the alleged perpetrators' (2012: 26). The original documents including the petitions and the findings of the judicial report are part of a file that Parveena keeps. According to the judicial report, Major S.N. Gupta of 16 Assam Rifles, Captain Dinesh Sharma, DD Head Quarters, and Captain S.C. Katoch,<sup>5</sup> Southern Command – all from the National Security Guard – had taken Javaid Ahangar on the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the early morning hours of the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, 1990, from Batamaloo, Srinagar. The inquiry found that Javaid was seen being beaten at the gates of the Hari Niwas Palace, which was turned into a detention/torture centre. During those days, masked and hooded informants were part of the army crackdown. These informants were usually former militants who had been tortured and were used as informers to identify militants and their hideouts. According to the inquiry report, the masked informant had told the NSG that Javaid was a student and that he was not a militant. According to the inquiry report one of the witnesses had seen Javaid being taken by the National Security Guards towards Pari Mahal, a seven-terraced garden built during Mughal reign, and located at the summit of the Zabarwan mountains. During those days Pari Mahal was another detention centre being used for interrogation and torture.

After the inquiry ordered by the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir was completed, the case was transferred to the Court of the Judicial Magistrate which began its proceedings. Directions were given to produce Captain Dinesh Sharma, Major S.N. Gupta and Captain S.C. Katoch in court. While Dinesh Sharma and S.N. Gupta were brought to Srinagar, S.C. Katoch, who was terminally ill with cancer in Pune, could not come. Sharma and Gupta were kept in Badami Bagh Cantonment, and did not appear in court. Instead, the army sent their public relations officer, Colonel Joshi. Parveena says that when her lawyer introduced her to Joshi as Javaid's mother, Joshi asked her 'What do you want? Do you want money? Do you want a job?' 'I don't need anything,' Parveena answered, 'I just want my son.'

Parveena recounts that on that day, she was so nervous that she fainted inside the courtroom. She had thought the army officer would reveal whether her son was dead or alive.

After the completion of the court proceedings, Parveena's file was sent to the Indian Home Ministry on June 25, 1996, for sanction for prosecution of the three accused. Under the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which came into force in September 1990, Indian armed forces cannot be prosecuted without the sanction of the Indian Home Ministry. The Central Government, in a communication on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July

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<sup>5</sup> There is some variation as to the ranks of these officers in the various court documents. However, the men are clearly identified.

1996, declined to grant sanction for the prosecution. Thus the Ministry of Home Affairs never gave sanction for prosecution in Parveena's case. In fact, these sanctions are never granted. Parveena's file lies among piles of other files at the premises of the Indian Home Ministry awaiting sanction for prosecution. According to the *alleged perpetrators* report, Javaid's enforced disappearance case is said to be 'one of the oldest cases available on record involving violations of the armed forces in the valley' (2012: 26). Parveena Ahangar's story of justice thwarted is the pervasive story of injustice for Kashmiris.

*'I lost faith in the justice system of India,' Parveena says, 'They were all lying.'*<sup>6</sup>

The consequences of the enforced disappearance of Javaid for Parveena and her family have been devastating. For years the entire family was caught up in the traumatic experience and the sense of chaos that followed. The everyday routine of the entire family was shattered. Ordinary things like a family dinner or an outing became rare privileges. Parveena's life now revolved around the search for Javaid. She laments that she neglected her daughter Saima, a toddler at that time. In her grief and anguish she was unable to care for her and had to send her to her parents' house. Her eldest son was only able to study until school level; he had to start working at their father's shop in order to support the family. During this time, Parveena's husband's health suffered enormously.

Speaking of the negotiations of gendered resistance against state violence, Ather Zia (2013) states that for many women members the decision to step out of private sphere has been a complex phenomenon. Parveena initially faced a struggle with her own family as well as the broader community for her act of stepping outside the house and searching for her son. For Parveena, searching for Javaid was a logical proactive step to find him. It was only when she saw her own life mirrored in thousands of other lives during her relentless visits to the families of victims that she recognized the enormity of the violence. She sought solidarity with others to take her struggle forward.

### **1994 onwards: Forming a Collective**

While fighting a legal battle, Parveena continued her search for Javaid. She met other people whose sons, husbands, fathers had been disappeared. She recognized their grief and desperation as her own. They, like Parveena, appealed to anyone who they believed might have any kind of access or influence in the echelons of state power, controlled by the Indian armed forces. These included members of the bureaucracy, the Indian parliament, and the local legislature. Their efforts were in vain. They spoke at public forums. They published announcements in local media which included newspapers, radio and television. They put up posters and pamphlets on court walls, shrines and other places of public or religious significance. Parveena began looking for news reports in local dailies about cases of enforced disappearance. The daily newspaper *Alsafah* would report each day on the disappeared and the killed/martyred. She began to compile names of the disappeared and their kin from these reports. She made a file with these newspaper cuttings. She still has the file.

With the armed struggle against the Indian state at its peak during the early 1990s, disappearances became routine, and the number of people searching for their disappeared kin also rose. Taking a lead from the addresses of the disappeared from the newspaper cuttings,

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<sup>6</sup> *The New Arab*. 2017. 'A Kashmiri Mother's Long Search for her Son.' 23 October  
< <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/indepth/2017/10/23/a-kashmiri-mothers-search-for-her-disappeared-son>>

Parveena began searching and visiting the families of the disappeared by travelling through highly militarised nooks and corners of the Kashmir Valley. Travelling across Kashmir was highly dangerous and fraught with risk. Parveena was not alone. She was accompanied by a distraught Habibullah Bhat, whose son Mohammad Maqbool Bhat had also been enforced disappeared. Together with Habibullah Bhat, she met family members, noted down their names and the names of the victims, and also began to collect witness accounts. In many ways, she had begun documenting cases of enforced disappearances. Parveena says, ‘in the beginning, we were just about fifty victim family members.’ In the compilation of this list, she was assisted by Advocate Mohammad Ashraf, proprietor of the Orion hotel.

This was a time when the Kashmir Valley was completely controlled by the armed forces. There were long curfews, and terror and fear were palpable on the streets. Despite these conditions, these family members would march to the gates of the High Court, hold rallies or sit on the roadside holding photographs of the disappeared and demand to know their whereabouts. It was these demonstrations that drew lawyers and journalists to the movement. One of these lawyers was advocate Parvez Imroz. As they sat outside the Jammu and Kashmir High Court at Srinagar, the state authorities would often chase them away. The families were struggling for a place to meet and talk. Thereafter, they decided to meet at Parveena’s home on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of every month. Mughal Mase, Bashir Ahmad Katskar, Habibullah Bhat, Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, Mohammad Amin Shah, Ghulam Nabi Mattoo, Ghulam Mohammad Bazaz, Mehrajuddin Bhat, and Mohammad Maqbool Shora were part of these early meetings. These family members would meet in her kitchen. They would discuss their experiences and course of action. Parveena recounts that she would often cook meals at her home for the affected family members who had come from far off in search of their loved ones. Parveena says, ‘I would feel for these members who were exhausted and desperate.’ These meetings, public rallies and demonstrations continued for a period of two years.

As the number of victim-families kept on increasing, it became unsustainable to meet at Parveena’s home. At one of the meetings, Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, a tailor by profession, suggested a public park as a venue for these meetings. By then the struggle of the victim-families had given them a certain confidence, so they felt able to assemble in a public park. Public parks could also make their cause more visible, and expand their movement. They began having their meetings at Sher-e-Kashmir Park in Srinagar on the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month. Currently, monthly sit-ins are held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of every month at Pratap Park, Srinagar, near the Press Colony.

The families consolidated their struggle to find their loved ones in a collective manner. In this struggle, they were supported by a network of lawyers, activists and journalists. These were the beginnings of a fledgling movement against the large-scale human rights violations taking place in Kashmir at that time. Human rights organisations and activists based in India and abroad started approaching the collective, offering their support. During those days Parveena was in close contact with international organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

By October 1994, the collective was formalized with 300 members as the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) with Parveena Ahangar at the helm.

According to Parvez Imroz:

*‘The families of the victims of enforced disappearances were doubly suffering: one was the disappearance and other was state’s unwillingness to provide any help and, in fact, added salt to their injuries. In such a scenario, I thought it would be better to*



*have an association of the families of victims of enforced disappearances - so as to form a collective of sufferings and a collective of documentation and evidence; and institutionalize it – i.e. give it a face and Parveena was one courageous lady who made it possible.'*

Parvez Imroz further underscores the brave act of forming an organization in the 1990s. As he states, *'in the 90s when everyone was terrorized by the state and when the security forces did as they pleased, being accountable to none - APDP was a super-human initiative.'*

In 2002, APDP led a protest outside the United Nations' Office in Srinagar. The police assaulted and detained activists and members of APDP including Parveena. While arresting Parveena, the police dragged her and pushed her into a moving vehicle causing her injury. The women were detained until late night. Police filed an FIR against Parveena and Parvez Imroz before releasing them on bail. The criminal case against Parveena and Parvez Imroz for this protest is still pending in the court.

Despite intimidation by the state machinery, the APDP has forged its way and consolidated itself as a movement against enforced disappearances and human rights violations more broadly.

APDP's emergence foregrounds the total inability of state institutions to deliver justice in Kashmir. In fact, these institutions meant to uphold the rule of law are the perpetrators. Zia (2019) has spoken of the ways in which the techniques and policy of the police has been to disappear enforced disappearances by not registering First Information Reports (FIR). Thus, she states, 'it appears that the Indian military occupation has therefore made conditions perfect for disappearing the disappearance as well' (2019: 33) Human rights violations like enforced disappearance and systematic torture are part of a state agenda meant to terrorise an entire population.

APDP's work demonstrates an evolving collective struggle and significantly represents a counter-discourse to Indian state and media narratives of Kashmiris often represented as suspect and violent bodies that need to be detained, tortured, disappeared raped or killed (Zia, 2019: 52 – 53). APDP - as a movement and struggle - has collectivised the demand for justice and accountability from the Indian state and has brought together a wide range of solidarity networks. Creative collaboration between these networks has enabled the creation of a political space in the context where dissent is continually choked. In doing so, APDP has ensured that the attempted erasure of injustice that Kashmiris have experienced can never be successful. APDP's contribution to the creation of this political space has been a subject of scholarship on Kashmir. Zia (2019) and Mathur (2016) argue that APDP has produced a political space through its rituals and performances of memory. APDP acts as a forum for a 'people's authority' in search for justice (Duschinski and Hoffman 2011).

Parveena's journey and role in the formation of APDP has transformed her into an icon, 'the Iron Lady of Kashmir.' She has spoken in forums in Kashmir, India, and across the world.

In 2005, Parveena's efforts attained global recognition when she was nominated for the alternative Nobel Peace Prize on 10 July 2005.

In 2011, Parveena was nominated for the Frontline Defenders at Risk award. She spoke at their Dublin Platform in October 2011.

In 2017, Parveena Ahangar was awarded the prestigious Rafto Human Rights Prize along with Advocate Parvez Imroz of the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society. The prize acknowledges the joint work of Parveena Ahangar and Parvez Imroz in exposing human rights violations in Kashmir for the last three decades in one of the world's most militarized zones. Her acceptance speech is available [here](#).

In 2019, Parveena Ahangar was recognized by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as among a 100 of the world's most inspiring and influential women.

Parveena's ethics of openness to all makes APDP part of a continually growing transnational network of students, academics, journalists, lawyers, musicians, poets, writers, and filmmakers. However, APDP maintains its integrity in receiving recognition or awards. In 2011, APDP refused the nomination of Parveena Ahangar as 'Indian of the year' award by the Indian corporate media house CNN-IBN. The recognition was deemed as a method to neutralize the struggle of APDP. The award had been advertised as recognition for 'architects and ambassadors of Brand India'. APDP duly protested the nomination of Parveena Ahangar in [its letter to CNN-IBN](#), and had it annulled.<sup>7</sup>

Parveena has represented APDP in the Philippines (2000), Thailand (2003), Indonesia (2005), Chiang Mai (2006), Bergen (2017), Geneva (2008, 2018, 2019), Cambodia (2009) and London (2014, 2015, 2018).

Over the years Parveena has also been invited to be part of protests and conferences organized in many cities in India by Indian civil society members, human rights activists and organisations. Parveena has tirelessly spoken and advocated not only the cause of enforced disappearances but for the entire gamut of human rights violations inflicted on Kashmir by the Indian state. Parveena is quite clear that the violations are not isolated but interconnected and systematic, meant to terrorise the people of Kashmir into submission.

## V. Memory, Justice and Survival

APDP as a movement draws its strength largely through its presence in the public space as a collective. There are several ways through which APDP is engaged in visible public action to agitate against state violence.

*I call out to you, O my Yusuf, Come!*  
*I call out to you, O my Yusuf, Come!*

The above verse from *Yusuf Nama*, from *Masnawi Yusuf Zulaika* by the poet Mahmud Gami (1765 – 1855) are often recited by the families of the disappeared to express grief and yearning for their dear disappeared.

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<sup>7</sup> Vij, S. 2011. 'Parveena Ahangar rejects CNN-IBN's Nomination of Indian of the Year 2011.' Kafil 12 December <<https://kafila.online/2011/12/11/parveena-ahangar-rejects-cnn-ibns-nomination-for-indian-of-the-year-2011/>>

There is a significant emotional and psychological difference between mourning the death of a loved one and mourning the disappeared. The Indian state's murder of civilians as well as militants in Kashmir are mourned intensely and collectively through funeral processions.

The sit-ins held every month by APDP perform a ritual of a different kind of an intense mourning – that of an endless wait, as photographer Showkat Nanda has termed it in his photographic series on the victims of enforced disappearance. This 'Endless Wait' is for the return of the disappeared.



'The Endless Wait' Haleema Begum – APDP member waits for husband Rashid.  
(Showkat Nanda - @Showkat Nanda/Magnum Foundation)

For the victim-families of the disappeared, there is never a closure to the sense of a deep grief. And almost always, there is also the residence of hope. The questions regarding the whereabouts of the disappeared seem interminable. The opening sequence of the documentary *Khoon Diy Baarav* (2015) conveys something of this tone of a profound lament of grief and hope: 'Are they dead? Are they alive? Have they become ether?'

Sitting in the green confines of Pratap Park, the endless wait for justice is a lamentation (Zia, 2013). This mourning is not a spectacle or a performance, as Parveena Ahangar and the other members of the collective remind the onlookers, it is for real. The atmosphere of silent grief, punctuated by questions and demands, weighs the air in a way that no photograph or image can capture. Here the disappeared are a public presence. They are no longer contained within the sketches or photographs that their family members hold. They are those who demand the state that they be returned to their families.



In a place where dissent in public space is almost impossible, this sustained coming out of the families in a public park situated in the heart of Srinagar city demanding accountability and justice is a political act to reclaim and recover. The act is about survival and endurance. It is this act which has given this women-led movement its voice and visibility – the act has to be acknowledged as their agency to express their grief and continue to forge their struggle. The image of the families sitting together, giving courage to each other to hold on to their loved ones has drawn into its fold a host of bystanders which include students performing theatre or creating art, activists, journalists, writers, artists, poets, and filmmakers. The call to justice here is also a call to join the movement.

### 30<sup>th</sup> of August the International Day of Enforced Disappearances

*'Memory is not a victim but a survivor'* - Uzma Falak

Uzma Falak's razor sharp poetic observation claims for Kashmiris a specific kinship with memory in the context of conflict, violence, trauma and the dream of freedom.

Victim families are also survivors, fighting the Indian state's attempts to erase its record of enforced disappearances or deny its scale. They fight for acknowledgement of the enforced disappearances, and of the return of their loved ones. They are witness to Indian state violence in Kashmir embodied in the enforced disappearance of their loved ones.

One powerful and distinctive site where wounds and resistance, memory, history, and witnessing are interwoven in an embodied manner is the day of the **30<sup>th</sup> of August, the International Day of Enforced Disappearances**. This is a day for international solidarity when the families of the disappeared all over the world - in India and in Pakistan, in Nepal and in Sri Lanka, in Indonesia and the Philippines, in Chile and in Argentina - congregate. The day is a commemoration of the disappeared, a tribute to the collective struggles of the victim-families, and an extension of APDP's solidarity with other struggles across different

parts of the world.

On this day every year APDP organizes special events and a protest. The lead-up to the annual event is always a busy one for APDP, family members of the disappeared from near and far, and around and across the Kashmir valley, come together to make present the presence of the enforced disappeared; their presence on posters and placards is a demand for justice. The young children sitting in the park are a living testimony. Their age seems marked by the years that their fathers have been disappeared. To the question of how old the son or a daughter is - the response is always punctuated by how old they were when their fathers were disappeared.

Police with batons and the all-too familiar guns slung on their shoulders also circle the victim-families of the silent protestors. Often, the police appear nonchalant, as if they are here simply to witness from afar the proceedings of the protest. Yet, their bodies and uniforms announce the presence of the state. This presence indicates the state's vigilance about the danger that victim-families of the enforced disappeared pose with regard to its record of human rights violations, even as the state denies the scale of enforced disappearance and its use as a systematic technique of occupation. According to Parvez Imroz, the Jammu and Kashmir government has made statements acknowledging enforced disappearances from time to time, but limits the scale of the disappearances.

On this day, Kashmiri, Indian and international journalists and media surround the family members clicking photographs, taking notes and recording video for news stories to be circulated all over the world. When the peak time of media attention is over, members of victim families sit in circles, conversing with each other. The atmosphere created by those waiting for knowledge of loved ones doesn't dissipate. It envelops those who have witnessed the protest.

Students, artists, performers largely from Kashmir join the protest – often engaging in silent theatrical performances of state violence and Kashmiri resistance. As the students enact an event of enforced disappearance. Silently, the performing 'mother' or 'wife' buckles into the arms of someone trying to comfort her. The sense of eternal suspense lingers. The eyes of APDP members are keenly fixed on the performance. They embody the 'beyond-the-end-of-the-performance.' They wait.

Online, the efforts to inform the world about enforced disappearances continue – through facebook, twitter, instagram and a webpage: <http://apdpkashmir.com>

For many Kashmiri poets, artists, novelists, musicians, journalists, photographers, and photojournalists, the ensemble of violent state practices necessitates the braiding of memory and history. Witnessing in all its forms become crucial to resistance against the Indian state's occupation in Kashmir. This resistance reveals an intimacy of body, mind, soul, and psyche in relation to the canvas of Kashmir's political history. Memory here is witnessing the violence of earlier historical events, which shapes the contours of present struggle. Witnessing proliferates: its forms include experiencing or seeing state violence first-hand, relaying accounts through friends or families, and sharing mediated accounts. Photographs and/or videos are circulated transnationally. Commentaries and news are written for Indian as well as international media. Public speech, private speech, conversations, interviews, letters to the editor, poetry, music, performance, and film – all these become a necessity, a witnessing of one kind or another.



Kashmir's beloved poet Agha Shahid Ali's invokes the term 'witness' in relation to the meanings of his name, Shahid. He references the Persian and Arabic meanings of 'beloved' and 'witness'. It is interesting in this sense, that Shahid also means 'martyr.' Agha Shahid Ali's invocation of the terms witness as beloved resonates powerfully with APDP's ethics of witnessing month after month, year after year. There are layers here: the beloved enforced disappeared are witness of state violence. Their family members bear witness through protests, through the stories and images of the enforced disappeared. Iffat Fatima asserts that for the women of APDP, memory is 'a political act . . . they live and relive every moment' (Ramnath 2015). 'Details are internalised into their beings', she says, 'so there is no question of forgetting – these people are not dead for them but alive' (Ramnath 2015). It is this embodiment of witnessing the lives of the enforced disappeared through their family members that gives these protests its distinctive power.

In observing APDP's protests, what is blindingly clear is that the collective demand for justice is addressed to the state, but it is also addressed to those who witness the protests on site or online. The necessity of opening oneself to 'the ethic' of the protestors is loud and clear at the APDP protests. Both silence and sound make ethical demands. In silence, the weight of sadness – of the absent presence of loved ones - hangs heavy in the air. Justice cannot be done for the years of trauma that the enforced disappearances have caused. In impassioned and fiery speeches which Parveena or sometimes other members of the collective make, the call to act is urgent. On August 30, 2017, from Pratap Park in Srinagar, an online witness tweeted Parveena's words: 'We will fight against the atrocities till our death so that future generations don't suffer what we have suffered.'<sup>8</sup>

To witness is to listen to the call of the ethical - to act. Witnessing becomes a relay between the enforced disappeared, their family members and us – those who witness. We are called to demand of our states, our international systems of accountability, the justice that victim-activists demand.

APDP further observes the International Human Rights day on the 10<sup>th</sup> December every year as a black day for human rights in Kashmir. Since the siege on August 5, 2019, APDP has been unable to hold its monthly and annual protests.

In 2009, APDP members travelled to India's capital city New Delhi. APDP members sat in a *dharna* and went on a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar. Jantar Mantar is a historic site located near the Parliament building in the Indian capital, where political protests are typically held. Over two days they were joined by civil society and human rights bodies and activists, students, artists and members of political parties. They were invited to Delhi University and to the Jawaharlal Nehru University where APDP members articulated their grief and distress and reached out to the students and the Indian community at large. APDP gained a lot of sympathisers and support in the larger Indian community. However, the state authorities and the ruling political establishment of the Congress party 'did nothing,' as Parveena says, to address their issues or put a balm on their wounds. In fact, they were not allowed to march and gather at India Gate which is next to the Indian Parliament; its centrality has symbolic significance for protest and dissent.

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<sup>8</sup> Twitter post. 2017. [https://twitter.com/\\_APDP](https://twitter.com/_APDP), last accessed 4 September 2017.

In May 2013, APDP members again travelled with a group of 150 Kashmiris to New Delhi. This time the protest was organised in the face of the unjust execution of Afzal Guru.<sup>9</sup> After an unjust trial Afzal Guru was executed on the orders of the Indian Supreme Court ostensibly to appease the ‘collective conscience’ of the Indian people. He was buried in Tihar jail where he was detained for 11 years. APDP was demanding that Afzal Guru’s body be released to his family. They were also protesting for an end to military violence in Kashmir. The protests were peaceful, but scores of police personnel assaulted the protesters, including women and children, beating them and dragging them into the waiting vans but even then they continued with the protests. As Mathur describes it, ‘even in the heart of empire, tales of sorrow and courage subverted the regime of terror and silence’ (2016: 146). Parveena described her experience of the protest to Mathur in these words: ‘I was there along with 10 other members of APDP. The whole day we protested there under scorching sun. Even the policewomen, who were present there wept when they heard our agonizing stories’ (Mathur, 2016: 146).

### ***Transnational Human Rights Activities and Networks***

Shubh Mathur’s (2016) ethnography comments on the keen ways in which APDP has engaged with international human rights instruments and mechanisms. Mathur states that in 2007 she introduced APDP to the complaints procedure ‘in reporting disappearances to the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances’ (WGEID) (2016: 71). The UNWGEID invited Parveena to attend one of their biannual sessions on enforced disappearances, which is held in Geneva. Due to lack of resources, Parveena could not attend that year. The next year, Parveena managed to travel to Geneva and made the submissions at the 86<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNWGEID. She was accompanied by human rights lawyer and activist Vrinda Grover. Their travel to Geneva was made possible with the support of filmmaker Iffat Fatima. Iffat Fatima had been working with APDP since 2006 on the project of enforced disappearances. The project was supported by an organisation called the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT). Funds for the project were raised by FOKUS a Norwegian-based women’s group through a television campaign. Since then, two more documentary films *Where have you Hidden My New Moon Crescent* (2010) and *Khooon Diy Baarav* (2015) emerged out of this collaboration.

After that initial engagement with the UN, APDP has continued to engage with international human rights institutions and mechanisms. APDP submitted a detailed report to the UN Special Rapporteur Margaret Sekaggya on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2011, on the situation of Human Rights Defenders in Kashmir. During the second UN Universal Periodic Review of India, APDP hosted then UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2012. A forum was organized for a brief interaction with a large number of affected families as well as J&K High Court Bar Association members, human rights activists, members of civil society, and senior journalists.

### ***Condemnations, enquiries and political declarations***

The APDP issues regular press releases about its stand on various actions of the state, condemning them unequivocally when they are unjust. It also regularly files Right to Information (RTI) petitions to enquire into factual details of cases and judgments of Indian

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<sup>9</sup> Anand, P. 2013. “The Gag is in Place: The bias against protestors from Kashmir.” *Outlook India*. 20 May <<https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/the-gag-is-in-place/285324>

courts, so as to counter them and formulate a public stand with regards to the cases or decisions.

### ***Support for victim-families***

Besides the emotional debilitation, enforced disappearances severely impacts the livelihood of the families. Often the disappeared family member is the sole income earner and the dependents are left destitute. Whatever resources they are able to generate is expended in searching for their loved ones. For these families, it is a struggle to survive. Over the years, APDP has become a source of support for a large network of victim-families. For years, drawing on the United Nations Voluntary Fund, APDP has provided medical, educational and socio –legal assistance to victim-families. APDP has developed a community support system and continues to network with other organizations to raise funds and create support facilities to assist victim-families.

### ***Socio-legal Activities***

In a situation where there is complete lack of transparency and information from the state regarding enforced disappearances, lack of documentation becomes one of the biggest barriers to justice. APDP collects detailed district-wise reports on disappearances and continues to update the list. APDP maintains files of the disappeared whose family members have chosen to be part of the collective. The files stacked in the office are a socio-legal record of the lives of the disappeared and the struggle of the families.

APDP continues to search for those who have been enforced disappeared by pursuing legal cases. In this, APDP is supported by legal consultants and volunteers, who formally record the cases, and assist the relatives in filing the case in courts. With their efforts several cases of enforced disappearances from Kashmir like that of Javaid Ahmed Ahanger, Humayun Azad, Manzoor Ahmad Wani, Javed Mattoo, Shabir Hussian Bhat, Sheikh Gowhar Ayub and Sajad Bazaz have been part of submissions to the United Nations WGEID.

### ***Documentation and Reports***

Over the years APDP has extended their documentation work to other areas. During the 2016 mass uprising in Kashmir, Indian forces engaged in the extrajudicial execution of more than a 100 civilians, and injured more than 15,000 persons. There were ‘4500+ injuries by the use of pellet shotguns with 1000+ civilians receiving eye damage fully or partially.’<sup>10</sup> APDP has been documenting cases of pellet blindings, torture, extra-judicial killings, and arbitrary detention. In 2019, APDP published a report on the victims of pellet injuries, [“My World is Dark’ – State Violence and Pellet Firing Shotgun Victims from the 2016 Uprising in Kashmir.”](#) The report includes testimonies from the victims in the context of the events of the 2016 uprising and state violence.

Arbitrary detentions which include juvenile detentions have been on a mass scale in Kashmir post 2019 revocation of Article 370. APDP published the [120 Days: 5<sup>th</sup> August to 5<sup>th</sup> December](#) report on the serious human rights violations that took place during the months of lockdown post the abrogation of Article 370.

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<sup>10</sup> Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society 2016. ‘Human Rights Review.’ Sringar: Kashmir.

### *Workshops and collaborations*

APDP holds legal literacy workshops where legal experts hold extensive discussions with victim-families about their legal cases, exploring the possibilities of following up on cases to hold the state accountable for enforced disappearances. APDP has been pushing state authorities for an independent and credible investigation commission for an inquiry into enforced disappearances. In collaboration with human rights organisations, APDP has also been conducting various workshops for victims of pellet injuries.

## **IV. Enforced Disappearances: Family Testimonies**

While the contexts within which enforced disappearances occur is varied, there is an eerie consistency in the methods through which people are disappeared by the state. Enforced disappearances have been used as a technique for collective punishment for an entire population, and to spread terror amongst Kashmiris who have dared to challenge Indian rule. Apart from the possible torture or death of the enforced disappeared, the aftermath of the disappearances has meant emotional, psychological, physiological and economic devastation and suffering for victim-families.

An unsuspecting farmer Farooq Ahmad Peer<sup>11</sup> working in his fields (Kupwara district) is asked to accompany a group of army personnel to a nearby village. He is disappeared. An auto-rickshaw driver in Srinagar Syed Anwar Shah<sup>12</sup> leaves work to return home and never returns. Fatheh Muhamamad Dar<sup>13</sup> in the process of setting up a textile business is abducted from Krunamboor jungle, Handwara. A young carpet weaver from Sajadabad in Srinagar Shabir Hussain Bhat<sup>14</sup> is taken from his residence. A BSc student, Gowhar Ayoub Sheikh<sup>15</sup> from Iqbalabad in Srinagar looking for job is enforced disappeared. A 30-year old *tonga* (horse-cart) driver Muhammad Ayoub Khan<sup>16</sup> from Kupwara is enforced disappeared. From elderly men like the 45-year old Bashir Ahmed Sheikh<sup>17</sup> to youngsters like Javaid Ahmed Mattoo,<sup>18</sup> a 13-year old in 7<sup>th</sup> standard, enforced disappearances appear to be indiscriminate.

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<sup>11</sup> Farooq Ahmed Mir was from Kupwara, arrested by BSF from Dodhwan village on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1994. He was 18 years old at the time of the enforced disappearance.

<sup>12</sup> Syed Anwar Shah, from Handwara, Kupwara was living in a rented accommodation at Fateh Kadal at the time of disappearance. He was 20 years old at that time and there is no witness to the enforced disappearance.

<sup>13</sup> Fateh Mohammad Dar from Magam was a surrendered militant, and army personnel (6th Rashtriya Rifles) would often come to his house and torture him. Finally on October 20, 2011, he was enforced disappeared.

<sup>14</sup> Shabir Hussain Bhat from Chattabal disappeared on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1994. He was taken by the 121 Infantry Battalion, 2 Gharwal Rifles (Indian Army) who were camped at Sharifabad at the time.

<sup>15</sup> Gouhar Ayub, from Batamaloo disappeared on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1995. He was arrested from new Bemina college Iqbalabad by 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Jat Regiment of the Indian Army. The victim was 19 yrs old of age then.

<sup>16</sup> Mohammad Ayub Khan, was arrested from school ground, Kurihama during a crackdown by 76 and 56 Battalion of the Border Security Force of Wuyan and Bategam camp on 14 October 1990.

<sup>17</sup> Bashir Ahmed Sheikh was a daily wage laborer, working as a house painter. He was abducted by the Border Security Force of the Indian Army on 16 June 1992. He was 45 years old at the time of abduction. He is survived by his wife, son, grandchild and daughter-in-law. He was abducted during a crack-down at Lal Chowk, Srinagar in broad day light, in presence of many witnesses who were there.

<sup>18</sup> Javid Ahmed Mattoo, a class 7<sup>th</sup> student, was 13 years old when he was abducted by the Border Security Force 182 Battalion, 3 November, 1993. He was abducted from his home, when, according to the family, the BSF 182 raided their house.

The case of Irshad Amin Khan, a businessman, demonstrates the indiscriminate patterns of enforced disappearances. The army kept harassing Khan at his house, suggesting that he had links with a militant group, of which the family had no knowledge. Even though Khan repeatedly denied having links with militants, they took him away in 2004. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, Khan was abducted by the 15th Corps of the Indian Army, Badami Bagh (BB) Cantonment, from his home at Bagh-e-Mehtab. When his mother visited the BB Cantonment, the army refused to accept that they had taken Khan, and told her that if she didn't stop coming to the Cantonment, they would kill her!

Azra, mother of Mushtaq Ahmed Dar, recounts how the army entered their home and began to smash or beat everything and everyone who came in their way. They asked for Mushtaq, alleging that he worked with the militants and had hidden weapons - a gun and a pistol - in his home. She recounts: *'They put the gun nozzle on my cheek and threatened that they will shoot; they demanded - show us where the weapons are. There were no weapons; had there been any, I would have given it to them.'* Mushtaq Ahmed Dar was arrested by the 33<sup>rd</sup> Grenadiers regiment on 13 April 1997 from his home in Tengpora, Srinagar. The army tortured him till 3:00am in the morning before taking him away. He was never returned.

On 21 January 2000, late in the evening, army personnel from the 6<sup>th</sup> Rashtriya Rifles barged into the Gassi house in Boat Colony Bemina, Srinagar, and asked for Shabir Ahmed Gassi, the youngest son of the family. The army told the family that he was hiding weapons. The shocked family told the army that they had no weapons in the house. The army ransacked the house. After searching the house for an hour, they didn't find any weapons. As they were leaving, the Major grabbed Shabir by collar and dragged him out with them. They threw him in their truck and left. Shabir Ahmed Gassi is now an enforced disappearance case. A local boy told Shabir's father, Nabi, that he has seen his son in Hankarmula Bemina army camp. When his father went to the camp, the Major there demanded Rs.40,000 for the release of his son. The father told them he would pay the money, but they would have to show him his son first. They declined at first but later, through an intermediary, they negotiated and told the father to bring half of the money to see his son first. Nabi drew Rs. 20,000, his savings, to see his son. However, the day he went there, the army officer was not present. The intermediary took the money and Nabi did not see his son or hear from the army again.

Manzoor Ahmed Wani, from Chattabal, was an automobile mechanic and was abducted by the forces on 28 March, 2003, while he was going to his workplace in Batamaloo. He was 26 years old at the time of his abduction. When they came to know of his abduction, the family went to the nearby police station in Chatabal Choki, Safakadal. However, the police refused to file a First Information Report, and also refused to give a copy of the missing report to the family – an act which has created legal problems. Manzoor's parents spent huge sums of money bribing the police and other officials who promised to help them to get in contact with their son, but nothing has come out of it, except more pain.

Judging by these cases, there are no patterns to the way security forces have enforced disappeared the men. But there are patterns regarding the techniques and the effects of enforced disappearances. Family members are often left in a state of utmost helplessness. Many of them do not know the 'right' procedures of tracing their loved ones. Following the right procedures are often futile. With the power of weapons and state impunity, India's security forces have unleashed a reign of terror on Kashmiri peoples.



When loved ones vanish in thin air without a trace, victim-families tend to experience sustained shock and severe helplessness. The immediate aftermath of a disappearance is important to understand. In most cases, the family rushes to the nearest police station or the army camp where the disappeared could possibly have been taken. Here the police often refuse to register a missing person's report. And if they do write up a report, the family is often misinformed about the whereabouts of their loved ones. Or, army does not acknowledge that they have ever seen the person.

On 7 July, 1997, the Wani family returned to their home in Bemina, Srinagar, after attending a marriage ceremony only to find out that Abdul Rashid Wani, their son-in-law, had disappeared. Shocked, they searched for him at every place possible but little did they know that they would never be able to see him ever again. The next day, as they continued their search, they received information that some army men had picked him up, the evening before from the fruit mandi (market) in Bemina and had taken him to the Rawalpura army camp (2/8 Gorkha Rifles). The family rushed to the camp there and pleaded the officer to release Abdul Rashid Wani. The officer blatantly denied having arrested such a person. After successive visits to the camp, Captain Yadav acknowledged the arrest, but asked them to come back a few days later as Wani was injured. The family was relieved that his whereabouts were acknowledged. But when they went back later, the Captain completely denied the arrest. The family was shattered and did not know what to do.

The official practice of negating the memories of the victim-families is part of the systemic violence of enforced disappearances. Many victim-families of the disappeared would find themselves bereft of words when security forces would take their relative in full public view, and would later deny the incident having taken place at all. There would be no explanations given, and official communications would assert the 'truth' that no arrest was made. For many families, this practice has meant that the thought of petitioning authorities is either futile or impossible. The disappearance of loved ones consists of an endless wait marked by incessant official deferral by the militarised structures that they are familiar with – like the nearest police station or army camp. These official practices cause the family members severe harm, distress and even deaths of other family members.

Bilal Ahmed Sheikh was abducted on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 1997, by the 20th Grenadiers regiment of the Indian Army from Tengpora Bypass. He was a student, enrolled in a Bachelors degree and in his 2nd year. He was 17-years old. According to his mother Rehmi Begum, they went to the Badaami Bagh Cantonment, Papa 1 and Papa 2 torture centres, but never saw him again. Rehmi Begum says:

*'I have wandered for two years from place to place, on foot to search for him. I would leave my home in the morning and come back in the evening. I didn't eat properly during those days, often missing the lunch and dinner. And due to it my health deteriorated. My legs became swollen, and my stomach was badly affected due to not taking food. So one day I couldn't go to search for him because I fell ill. However, my husband has continued to search for him, in vain, and the search and not finding his son broke his heart. He died due to his son's disappearance (weeps and sobs, then a long pause).'*

Irfan Ahmed Khan, from Safakadal, was a student in class 9 when he was abducted by the 24 Grenadier regiment of the Indian Army. He was returning home from Mohammadiya Public School at Safakadal. Later his family, his father and mother, came to know of the

disappearance through various eye-witnesses who had seen him being paraded by the army in a crackdown in Batamaloo, in uptown Srinagar. After Irfan's disappearance there is hardly any military camp or torture centre his mother has not visited.

His mother states:

*'I know that I would have to spend my life running from jail to jail, army camp to army camp in his search? I did not know that I have to be humiliated by the army again and again. Had I known this I would have prayed to the God not to give me any children.'*

When Irfan (mentioned above) was taken, and his parents continued their brave search for him, the police and the Special Task Force members started to harass them. They would raid their house in the Safakadal and would beat up his father.

His mother recounts: *'to save our lives, we moved to Rainawari, to my maternal home. After a month, we returned back and the STF took my husband and tortured him at Papa 2 – the infamous torture centre. I was left alone, with my elder daughter. I left the daughter at neighbors' home and would go out to the Papa2 to search for my husband. Those days I forgot about my son. I had to rescue my husband. I begged and touched the feet of the police officers and the army officers to release my husband. I promised them that I would not speak anymore about my son if they released my husband. After spending one month at Papa 2, finally, my husband was released. He was brutally tortured. The electric shocks were given to him, and his hands were broken. My husband could not work after that!'*

While the families have been relentless in the quest for the loved ones, leaving no stone unturned, the army, the police and the paramilitary often use these very searches to further persecute victim-families. The immediate search for the disappeared by the victim-family members was marked by a determination to find them come what may. But the security agencies respond to this determination with further violence - through misinformation, harassment and torture for the rest of the family members.

The prolonged search for a disappeared family member especially for those with limited means – both financially and in terms of information – starts impacting the other aspects of life in a variety of ways. The family's daily activities start revolving around the disappearance! Many of the disappeared men have been the sole bread earners of their families. So, the economic effects for many families has been harsh.

For example, Musthaq Ahmed Dar of Tengpora, an auto-rickshaw driver and part time baker, was detained by the 33rd Grenadiers regime from his home on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1997. After his disappearance the family went through an economic crisis and had a hard time surviving. After the above-mentioned case of Abdul Rashid Wani's disappearance – his parents, his wife and two children were left in a limbo as he was the sole breadwinner in the family.

Shabir Ahmed Gassi's wife, mentioned above, states that on some days she had to beg in order to feed her hungry children.



Many women sell their jewelry, and in some cases the households sell land or other property to pay bribes to the officials or mediators who have agreed to help them. Manzoor's family only had 2 marlas of land, which they sold to get some news of him. Similarly Azra Begum, mother of Mushtaq Dar, sold her jewellery to get some news about her son! Dilshada, wife of Bashir Ahmed Sofi, sold her jewellery and used her *mehr* money (money that grooms pay to brides as per religious rituals) to bribe the officials! Her husband was a shawl seller from Naidkadal. He was abducted by the Border Security Force of the 61 BT Karan Nagar Branch on 17 June 2003. He was abducted from his home in presence of his family members and the neighbours. He was twenty-five at the time.

Many families have also approached the State Human Rights Commission and while most of the cases are still pending there – some of the families have been provided with *ex-gratia* relief of Rs.1 lakh from the state for the loss of life and nothing more! And some of them even refuse to take that from the state, because it is the state that has disappeared their loved one. They are fighting for the return of their loved ones or to know of their whereabouts. While economic issues loom large, enforced disappearances bring on a psycho-social crisis. Many suffer from depression, sleepless nights, and stress-related conditions. Shabir Ahmed Gassi's wife narrates how she would have committed suicide had her father in law not been able to support her children. Mushtaq Ahmed Dar's mother Azra talks about various cardiac ailments and sleeplessness that she suffered after her son disappeared. While money is used to finding traces of the disappeared, victim families face severe medical traumas that take up a part of their incomes. Other psycho- social effects include guilt for not being able to protect the loved one. Irfan Ahmed Khan's mother (the case is mentioned above) states, 'I have failed him. He was my child. How can a mother be so careless not to protect her own child? I wish they had taken me instead of him.' Bilal, the 2<sup>nd</sup> year BA student's mother recounts that he was half-naked when they pulled him out of his bed and took him. 'As a mother, I could not save him,' she exclaims.

Many believe in the power of dreams and faith healers when nothing else seems to help. Mushtaq's mother saw him in a dream where he was with a policeman who gave him keys and told him that he was free. Similarly, Bilal's mother had a dream where Bilal told her that the army had fallen in love with him and would not let him go. She took it as a sign of his survival. Celebratory days or festivities are difficult. Bilal's mother says that the family's

peace has been snatched and that they do not celebrate Eid because they utterly miss him and feel his absence.

Beyond this it is the helplessness and futility of the search that is most hard to bear. Shabnum, Abdul Rashid Wani's wife recalls how the judge in the Srinagar High Court asked them to withdraw the case as there was no use pursuing it, as they could write nothing against the military. The lives of such families are caught up in a vicious circle, where one misery paves way for another. The families believe that there is no justice in Kashmir. As Fatima Bano, Bilal's mother says, 'there is no justice here, our boys have vanished as if they never existed!'

Many families express an acute need to get out of the limbo in which they are placed, and they also place faith in the return of their loved ones. Bilal's mother said she would not stop to search for him until the day of her death. When Irfan's father was tortured, even then the family did not stop looking for him as they believe he is alive somewhere! A knock at the door and Shabnam, wife of Abdul Rashid Wani thinks that he is home. She has not re-married because she believes her husband to be alive.

Most of the families have a shared feature of resilience in the face of failures. Some of this resilience may be attributed to the sense of collectivity that the APDP provides.

## **VI. Gender and Transnational Contexts**

APDP's activities and struggle can be located in Kashmir's gendered history of struggle.

APDP breaks stereotypes about Kashmiri Muslim women often encountered in popular discourses or even in human rights documents as only victims (Zia 2019; Mathur 2016; Kazi 2009; Anjum 2011). The relentless organizational activities of this largely female-led organisation, the founding of solidarity networks, the pursuance of legal strategies – all of these are part of the gendered resistance APDP has been engaging in. A brief look at the history of gendered politics in Kashmir shows a variety of different forms of resistance that Kashmiri women continue to engage in.

### **Women Participation in Kashmir's Resistance**

As Kashmir is a conflict zone, media and governmental attention is often emphasizing a masculine state machinery vs. male freedom fighters or 'militants.' Seema Kazi (2009) has argued not only for examining the gendered techniques and effects of militarisation, but also points to Kashmiri women's participation in the struggle for Kashmiri sovereignty. Recent studies by Ather Zia (2019, 2013) and Deepti Misri (2014) substantiate the nuances of Kashmiri women in the doubleness of victimhood and agency. Inshah Malik (2019) argues especially for the agentic role that Kashmiri Muslim women have played in Kashmir's freedom struggle. In this context, it is important to note that militarisation is not limited to public spaces; its techniques blur the distinctions between public and private spaces. In this sense, Kashmiri women have always engaged with state militarisation and violence (Kaul and Zia 2018). Khan (2010) speaks of Kashmiri women's roles and resistance in the various uprisings of 1931, 1947 and 1989, where women have played active role. During the armed

struggle from 1989 onwards, the spontaneous cultural expression of the *wanuwan* – a traditional Kashmiri song of celebration – intertwined with couplets in praise of local *mujahids* (or the ‘militants’) by the women would garner huge support from other women. This sort of activism was rooted in their traditional roles as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters were often on par with men chanting feverishly for *azadi* (freedom). A 60-year old senior teacher at Government college for women expresses this aptly when she says:

*‘The situation [militarisation] in Kashmir changed . . . women’s limited participation in public life, women have been drawn outside...into public roles. I walked with hundreds of women and men in 1990 during protests against the Indian government. There were many women in these demonstrations and a feeling of, what should i say...comradeship and camaraderie, a feeling that we were all there because of a shared vision for the future’* (Kazi 2009: 141).

Kashmir also witnessed the emergence of women’s organisations such as *Dukhtaran-e-Millat* (an all-woman organization founded by Aasiya Andrabi in 1987) and *Muslim Khawateen-e Markaz* (founded by Zamrud Habib in late 1980s). These organisations have worked for the cause of *azadi* in very different ways. Aaliya Anjum (2011) speaks about the many kinds of resistance amongst Kashmiri women. From women’s participation in militant groups, their participation in political parties, to Parveena Ahangar’s formation of APDP, gendered resistance in Kashmir has always been a strong component. Images of women stone-throwers have also appeared on the media (Zia 2019).

APDP’s formation can be located in within this gendered history.

In the larger milieu of participation by women in various capacities within the resistance movement, APDP holds a special place. APDP is often not perceived as a threat to state power yet works to expose state violence internationally. Ather Zia (2013) states that Kashmiri women have acted within constrained spaces (not only because of the conflict but also because of their gendered existence in a patriarchal society). This negotiated agency marks a different face of collective resistance to the patriarchal violence of occupation and enforced disappearances.

## Transnational Contexts

APDP’s struggle also resonates with the gendered struggles of associations of families of disappeared persons across the world.

*“What did you find of your brother?” “I found a foot. It was still in his shoe. I found some of his teeth. I found part of his forehead, his nose, nearly all of the left side of his skull...I remember his tender expression and that was all that remained – a few teeth, bits of bones and a foot!...our final moment together was when his foot was at my house...that night I woke up and went to stroke his foot... [Crying]... the next day my husband went to work and I spent all morning with my brother’s foot. We were reunited. It was a great joy and a great disappointment because only then did I take in the fact that my brother was dead!”* (Guzmán 2010).

*“When I miss him, I want to tear apart rocks and mountains... it is a deep sorrow...I crave to see him at least once...”*

- Mughal Mase, the mother of Nazir Ahmad Teli (Fatima 2009)

*Nothing but death will end my search.*

- Parveena Ahangar

Patricio Guzman's *Nostalgia for the Light* (2010) is a powerful film on Chilean enforced disappearances. The woman quoted above speaks in this film; she is a member of the Asociación de Madres de Plaza de Mayo who were in search of children disappeared during Augusto Pinochet's regime in Chile between 1976 and 1983.

Common to all the quotes above is the sense of determination in the face of grief and pain. This vocabulary of determination and grief finds its resonance in APDP's activities. Mughal Mase has passed away, but APDP continues the struggle to find her son, Nazir Teli. Parveena Ahangar says of her son, *'I am eager to see him once and hug him.'* These sentiments are the ties that bind the collective. Parveena observes that 'we share our pain with each other. We cry and console and tell each other not to lose hope and continue the struggle.'

An Uruguayan mother says in the context of the South American movement against disappearances, 'The pain we have suffered helps us to understand the pain of other people; it is on the surface of our skin. You can touch it and feel it' (Malin 1994: 204). This experiential solidarity therefore, extends beyond geographical boundaries and references gendered resistance to state violence across borders.

Despite limited resources, APDP has always kept its doors open for interested students, activists and allies across the world. As Parveena proclaims, *'I started as a crazy grieving mother. Today I have the support of students from all over the world. Hundreds of students from all over come to help me – to make our voice heard. Initially some members were doubtful but slowly we have overcome fears and are able to see the importance of this force and support.'*

## **VII. Challenges, Visions, and a Prologue**

'It's a struggle and it will continue.' One of APDP's team members, Haifa, sums it up aptly during an interview when asked what the future of APDP is. As mentioned earlier, Parveena considers that her biggest strength is students who come as interns, learn about APDP, and support APDP's cause for justice. APDP's forging of local and transnational networks creates a space for association while remaining intensely local in its support for the victim-family members.

The biggest challenge that the APDP faces is that in a militarised conflict zone, justice for human rights violations are not heeded by the state. India has still not ratified the international protocol against enforced disappearance and no sanctions are given for prosecutions. Apart from providing immunity to the armed forces, the AFSPA protects the perpetrators.

Collecting data regarding enforced disappearances is an uphill task due to the ways in which authorities continue to cover-up the trails and clues regarding the disappeared. The continual bans on the internet, restrictions on movement, restrictions on assembly, speech and expression makes for a challenging, to say the least, environment for APDP to work in. APDP works with minimal resources, even though it manages to continue with its work through steadfast resolve.

The trust deed of APDP mentions that its primary objectives are to search for the whereabouts of the victims of enforced disappearance; provide legal aid and livelihood assistance for the victim-families of enforced disappearances; rally for the repeal of draconian laws such as Armed Forces Special Powers Act, the Disturbed Areas Act and the Public Safety Act; pressure the state for justice for the victim-families; demand an independent and credible commission of inquiry to investigate enforced disappearance; organize protests, demonstrations, workshops, conferences and seminars to continuously keep the families and larger public engaged with the issue and highlight the need for redressal; garner support for all its activities from local and international human rights organizations and to build networks and partnerships with allies and institutions. One of the primary challenges for APDP is a comprehensive and need-based rehabilitation programme for the families of the disappeared – especially those that are in dire circumstances.

APDP seeks to construct a memorial for the disappeared. Such a memorial would be extremely important as a public and permanent recognition of the grief and pain of victim-families. Children born after the enforced disappearance of their fathers laid the foundation stone in a corner of the martyr's graveyard, where prayers are offered on annual Eid festivals. The stone was destroyed. In 2003, APDP purchased another piece of land on the outskirts of Srinagar and erected a memorial there. The state authorities dismantled it a few days later. APDP is still seeking to construct this memorial.

Beyond these activities, Parveena states: 'The larger vision, or rather wish, of each and every mother or family member associated with APDP is and will be to find their son, father, brother or husband.'

### **Prologue: A memory that never fades, a search that never ends...**

Bakhti Begum sits droopily in sweltering heat, sharing the silence along with several other women and some men as part of the monthly sit-in organized by Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP). Bakhti Begum's son Manzoor Ahmed Wani was enforced disappeared on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2001.

She is quite used to the several cameras that point at her, shifting positions with ease. But what she is not used to still – even after so many years of participation – is the silence. The eerie silence makes her sweat. It numbs her body and transports her mind to that night. It was a night perhaps as silent as now. The only difference being that it was a joyful stillness. A wintery night of uneventful bliss! She remembers that her son had been recently married and his wife Jabeen was carrying their child. Her son Manzoor Ahmad Wani, she thought, would be driving the bus back home. This bus earned him a living and it was the end of a long day's work; he would be home any time. The road that ran up to the house through the apricot orchard of Kupwara lay in expectant tranquility. Little did she suspect that the bus would never arrive!



Later she heard the horrid tale through her pregnant daughter-in-law who was with Manzoor in the bus driving back to the house. The vehicle was stopped by an army convoy blocking the road. They had beaten up Manzoor and taken his helpless body in a truck. Her daughter-in-law described his bloodied face, and that image has remained in Bakhti Beghum's last memory of her son, even if she did not witness it.

She recounts after the sit-in, how the family including herself, rushed to the 28th Battalion Rashtriya Rifles camp, located in Tragpora - Rafiabad, very close to their home. Major Bhattacharya was posted here. Bakhti identified the Major, who had taken Manzoor along with two armed Ikhwanis<sup>19</sup>. The Major was at first friendly with the aggrieved family, telling them that Manzoor was fine and that he would be released soon. Later, he did a complete about turn and denied having arrested Manzoor at all. Several times Manzoor's brother, Abdul Hamid Wani, approached the Major only to be threatened overtly and covertly with regard to his life. Despite the grave intimidation the family managed to file a complaint at Sopore Police Station on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2002. The case went onto the High Court at Srinagar where it was affirmed and passed to the State Human Rights Commission. The State Human Rights Commission filed the case, and the matter taken up with security forces. However, no information has been forthcoming about Manzoor's enforced disappearance.

The family still lives under considerable threat both from the Army and the Ikhwanis (who were angered by the family's decision to approach the courts). APDP made a submission of the case to the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) at Geneva. Bakhti's heart was pierced by the response of the Indian Government to the Working Group. Read to her by APDP staff, the response simply dismisses the allegations of harassment of the victim's family members as baseless and confidently abrogates the matter to the High Court where the case is still pending (Mathur, 2016).

The memory of her son's bloodied face meanwhile still haunts her. She wishes she had some more time with him, and that he could have seen his child who was born a few months later. The search for him, she says, will never end.

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<sup>19</sup>Ikhwanis refer to the surrendered Kashmiri militants, who are paid and trained to help the security forces to counter militant groups. Between 1994 and 1998, the pro-government militants became an extremely potent weapon in counter-insurgency campaigns in Kashmir. They helped security forces identify wanted militants and dealt out their own brand of justice with impunity and at the same time maintained a reign of terror in the local population.

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