



KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN INDIAN-ADMINISTERED KASHMIR

February 1, 2024 – February 29, 2024

SUMMARY

In February 2024, Indian authorities continued to commit grave human rights violations in Indian-administered Kashmir (IAK). Indian forces continued to systematically arbitrarily detain people, raid homes and expropriate property, including houses and agricultural land. The Indian government extended the ban (instituted in 2019) on Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir (Jel) and banned several other pro-rights organizations. The Indian government passed laws to further disempower Muslims in IAK.

Numerous Kashmiri journalists, human rights defenders, political activists, and dissenters continue to be arbitrarily detained. In a case emblematic of Indian repression targeting Kashmiri human rights defenders, Khurram Parvez has been illegally imprisoned in a maximum-security facility in New Delhi for over 2 years (871 days). In a case emblematic of the repression targeting Kashmiri journalists, Aasif Sultan has been illegally imprisoned for over five and half years (2,053 days).

Due to ongoing repression by Indian authorities, key developments in the human rights situation in IAK have likely gone unreported.

Note: Indian authorities typically label pro-human rights activity in IAK as “terrorist” activity. Indian authorities also often label any victim of state violence or a human rights violation (and not just armed resistance fighters) as a “terrorist” or “militant” and any dissenter in IAK as a “terrorist,” “secessionist,” or “militant.” If a violation occurs near the Line of Control (LOC), the victim is typically labeled a “foreign terrorist,” “intruder,” or “infiltrator.” If the victim is not affiliated with any organized dissent, they are often labeled an “overground worker” (or “OGW”), “hybrid militant,” “hybrid terrorist,” or “militant associate.” If the individual is a journalist, scholar, or human rights defender, they are often labeled a “narrative terrorist” or “white collar terrorist.” These unsubstantiated, demonizing and dehumanizing labels are used to legitimate violations against civilians, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, raids, and the forcible taking of property.

VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

On February 12, 2024, a Hindu supremacist group disrupted, and achieved the cancelation of, the screening of the [‘I Am Not The River Jhelum’](#), a film about state violence in IAK.

On February 13, 2024, Indian authorities ordered [The Caravan](#) to delete an investigative [report](#) regarding the Indian Army’s torture of 16 people and murder of 3 in Poonch on December 22, 2023.

On February 26, 2024, the Indian government [denied entry](#) to Nitasha Kaul, a professor at the University of Westminster of Kashmiri origin, despite holding a valid Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card. Kaul’s denial is

emblematic of a broad, longstanding, systematic, escalating and minimally reported denial of the right to travel to Kashmir which includes the denial of passports, the revocation of passports and the denial of entry; Indian authorities have also been [systematical canceling](#) the OCI cards of dissenters. Kaul was held in solitary confinement for 24 hours before being deported.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND RAIDS

Indian authorities continued to arrest, arbitrarily detain, and raid people in IAK

On February 2, 2024, Indian authorities [raided](#) five locations in the Saidapora, Eidgah and Ahmadnagar areas of Srinagar and in New Delhi, India in connection with the funding of alleged “unlawful activities.”

On February 7, 2024, the Indian authorities [raided](#) different locations in South Kashmir including the house of arbitrarily detained Muslim religious leader Sarjan Barkati.

On February 10, 2024, the Indian National Investigation Agency (NIA) [raided](#) locations in the Kulgam district and the Gujjar Nagar area of Jammu targeting individuals affiliated with [Jel](#), a formerly influential socio-religious Muslim organization in IAK.

On February 11, 2024, the NIA [raided](#) 15 locations in IAK targeting Jel and seizing property.

On February 11, 2024, the Indian authorities [arbitrarily detained](#) Mohammad Azam of Pukharni, Nowshera for alleged involvement in “unlawful activities.”

On February 13, 2024, Indian authorities [arbitrarily detained](#) Adil Manzoor Langoo of Zaldagar, Srinagar, labeling him a “terrorist.”

On February 14, 2024, the Indian authorities [arrested](#) Mohammad Akbar Bhat and Fatima Shah of Srinagar and Sabzzar Ahmad Sheikh of Anantnag for alleged “terror funding.”

On February 15, 2024, the Jammu and Kashmir State Investigation Agency (SIA) [raided 18 locations](#) in Srinagar district in connection with an alleged “terrorist conspiracy.”

On February 15, 2024, the Indian authorities [arbitrarily detained](#) Rafeeq Ahmad Ganie of Lalpora, Kupwara district and labeled him a “terrorist associate.”

On February 16, 2024, the Jammu and Kashmir Police [arbitrarily detained](#) 50 trade union activists for planning a protest in solidarity with ongoing farmers' protests.

On February 26, 2024, Indian authorities [arbitrarily detained](#) Sheikh Danish Mushtaq of Aloosa, Bandipora, Gulam Mohammad Waza of Bagh, Bandipora and Mohamad Amin Rather of Mohalla Ajas, Bandipora and imprisoned them in Central Jail, Kot Bhalwal, Jammu.

On February 27, 2024, the Indian authorities [arbitrarily detained](#) Mehraj ud din Bhat of Mundyari, Pattan and labeled him a “militant associate.”

On February 28, 2024, Indian forces [arbitrarily detained](#) Arif Hussain Bhat of Mundji Bomai, Sopore and labeled him a “terrorist associate.”

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DISEMPOWERMENT, AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Indian government passed controversial laws to sway electoral gains

On February 5, 2024, the [Local Bodies Laws \(Amendment\) Bill, 2024](#) was introduced in the Indian parliament granting “special reservations” to the Pahari ethnic group; the parliament [passed](#) the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2023 on February 6, granting “scheduled tribe” status to the Pahari ethnic group and certain other communities in IAK. These bills grant predominantly Hindu, privileged, high-caste and pro-BJP ethnic groups structural preferences intended for the empowerment of disempowered groups. As previously discussed in our [July 2023](#) and [August 2023](#) updates, these bills are part of the systematic furthering of the disempowerment of Muslims in IAK and the systematic expansion of disproportionate, structural advantages to pro-BJP elements in IAK. Despite the context of repression and reprisals in IAK, the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities, predominantly Muslim tribes in IAK and historic beneficiaries of a preferential status as a disempowered group, have publicly [protested](#) these decisions.

Indian government expanded bans on pro-rights Kashmiri organizations

On February 27, 2024, the Indian government [extended the ban on Jel](#) (instituted in 2019) for five more years.

On February 28, 2024, the Indian government [banned](#) both factions of the Muslim Conference Jammu and Kashmir, a pro-self-determination political party, for five years.

STATE SURVEILLANCE

Indian forces intensify surveillance in IAK

On February 8, 2024, Indian forces held a high-level meeting on [enhancing](#) already expansive surveillance practices in IAK, including intensifying surveillance, strengthening intelligence networks, adopting new techniques and integrating new technology. Additional [details were published](#) on the illegal police “census” discussed in our [January 2024](#) update.

COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

Internet services suspended in several districts of Kashmir

On February 4, 2024, the Indian authorities [suspended internet services](#) in the Poonch and Rajouri districts.

VIOLATIONS OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Indian authorities restricted religious practices and arbitrarily detain Muslim religious leader

On February 9, 2024, Indian forces [arbitrarily detained Mirwaz Umar Farooq](#), the designated sermon-giver at Jamia Masjid, Srinagar, preventing him from leading his congregation in Shab-e-Mehraj services. He has been

arbitrarily detained for most of the last few years and generally denied the right to lead his congregation in religious services, including Friday prayers.

On February 26, 2024, Indian authorities [prohibited Shab-e-Baraat prayers](#) at Jamia Masjid, Srinagar.

TAKING OF PROPERTY AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY

Indian authorities continued to systematically expropriate property

On February 3, 2024, Indian authorities refused to register the students of [St Joseph's Higher Secondary School](#), a 121-year-old school, for board examinations because the Jammu and Kashmir administration has refused to provide a customary renewal of the school's land lease since 2018. Many schools and other institutions and businesses in IAK have similarly been denied customary renewal of leases contrary to longstanding practice in Jammu and Kashmir, effectively expropriating their property.

On February 20, 2024, the NIA [expropriated the houses](#) of Aafaq Ahamd Wani, Muneer Ahmad Pandey, Saleem Andrabi, and Islam-ul-Haq, all residents of Handwara, for alleged "narco-terrorism."

On February 29, 2024, the Indian authorities [expropriated properties](#), including agricultural land in Kawcherwan and Tangchatter areas, allegedly belonging to six individuals from Kangan, Ganderbal who allegedly went to Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

IMPUNITY AND LACK OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE

34 years have passed since the most infamous mass rape in modern Kashmiri history

February 23, 2024, marked [34 years of impunity](#) for the February 23, 1990 mass rape and mass torture committed by the Indian Army in Kunan and Poshpora, Kupwara.

Aasif Sultan released only to be rearrested

On February 28, 2024, Kashmiri journalist [Aasif Sultan was briefly released](#) (after a court quashed the order legalizing his arbitrary detention on December 11, 2023) only to be immediately [rearrested](#).

Indian government to review winding up UN Office in Kashmir

On February 12, 2024, Indian authorities announced their intent to [shut down the UN office](#) in Srinagar (the UN Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan has operated on both sides of the LOC since January 1949).

PUBLIC STATEMENTS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND REPORTS

On February 7, 2024, the [Washington Post](#) published a photo editorial (featuring work by Sharafat Ali) focusing on the perils, repression and trauma of doing journalism in IAK.

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