



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

March 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024

### SUMMARY

In March 2024, Indian authorities continued to commit grave human rights violations in Indian-administered Kashmir (IAK). Indian forces killed at least one person and escalated their ongoing, systematic campaign of mass arbitrary detention in the lead-up to Indian elections. Indian authorities banned several pro-self-determination groups. While free speech and assembly remain criminalized, Indian authorities coerced participation in BJP rallies.

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 almost two and half years (883 days). In a case emblematic of the repression targeting Kashmiri journalists, Aasif Sultan has been illegally imprisoned for over five and half years (2,065 days).

**Note:** Due to repression and reprisals by Indian authorities, key human rights developments in IAK have likely gone unreported. In describing events in IAK, Indian officials regularly use unsubstantiated, demonizing labels to launder state repression and legitimate violations, including by labeling: pro-human rights activity in IAK as "terrorism" or "secessionism;" any victim of state violence or violations (and not just armed resistance fighters) as a "terrorist," "militant," "over ground worker," "terrorist associate" or "militant associate" and, if near the Line of Control (LOC), a "foreign terrorist," "intruder," or "infiltrator;" and any dissenter in IAK as a "terrorist," "secessionist," or "militant" and, if the individual is a journalist, scholar, or human rights defender, a "narrative terrorist" or "white collar terrorist."

### KILLINGS AND EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

#### Prominent Kashmir freedom fighter killed in Pakistan

On March 2, 2024, Sheikh Jameel-ur-Rehman was [found executed](#) after being abducted in what appears to be another incident in India's [ongoing transnational targeted killing campaign](#) targeting Kashmiri activists.

#### Man killed by CRPF vehicle

On March 9, 2024, personnel from India's Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) ran over and [killed](#) Habbibullah Shergozi in Gulshan Chowk, Bandipora, Kashmir.

## **VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY**

### Government employees forced to attend Modi rally in Srinagar

On March 4, 2024, the Indian administration in IAK [forced government employees](#) to attend a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rally featuring Narendra Modi in Srinagar's Bakshi Stadium.

### Systematic reprisals for dissent continued

On March 15, 2024, Indian authorities [terminated the employment of a teacher](#), Manzoor Ahmed Laway of Manzgam, Kulgam, district for alleged “anti-national activities.”

On March 28, 2024, Indian authorities [arrested three people](#), including Irfan Ahmed Bhat, a juvenile from Baramulla, for allegedly “misleading people” on social media.

On March 8, 2024, the Indian Supreme Court [set aside](#) a judgment of the Bombay High Court in the Maharashtra Police’s criminal prosecution of Professor Javed Ahmed Hajam for describing the abrogation of Article 370 as a “Black Day” on WhatsApp.

## **ARBITRARY DETENTIONS**

### Ongoing, systematic campaign of mass arbitrary detention escalated in the lead-up to Indian elections

Indian authorities’ ongoing campaign of mass arbitrary detention in IAK [escalated](#) prior to Narendra Modi’s March 7, 2024 visit to IAK and otherwise in the lead-up to India’s elections. Consistent with past practice, few of what are likely hundreds of new detentions have been publicly reported. Non-public reports indicate that many are being held without any order or charge and that families have acceded to official demands not to speak about detentions in order to avoid threatened prolonged preventive detention outside of Kashmir.

On March 16, 2024, India’s National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed [charges against](#) two individuals, Mohd Akbar Dar and Ghulam Nabi Dar, both residents of the Kokernag, Anantnag district, for allegedly being “over-ground workers.”

On March 19, 2024, the Indian authorities [filed charges](#) against Zaheed Ahmad Khoja and Zameer Ahmad Lone for alleged “terrorism.”

On March 20, 2024, Indian authorities [detained two individuals](#) from Kupwara district for alleged links to “terrorist activities.”

On March 23, 2024, Indian authorities [detained four individuals](#), Mohammad Yaseen Bhat, Sheraz Ahmad Rather and Gulam Hassan Khandey of Lachnambal, Zafran Colony, Pantha Chowk, Srinagar, and Imtiyaz Ahmad Bhat of Frestabal, Pampore for alleged links with “terrorists.”

On March 24, 2024, Indian authorities [detained two individuals](#) from Anantnag district for alleged involvement in “terrorist activities.”

On March 25, 2024, Indian authorities [filed charges](#) against four individuals, Ehsan Ul Haq Sheikh, Owais Feroz Mir, Abrarul Islam and Ishtiyaq Nazir Dar, for alleged involvement in “terrorist activities.”

On March 26, 2024, Indian authorities [preventively detained two individuals](#), Danish Parvaiz and Abrar Ahmad Wani of Sumlar, Bandipora district, under the Public Safety Act (PSA) for alleged “anti-national activities” and transported them to Central Jail, Kot Bhalwal, Jammu.

On March 28, 2024, Indian authorities [arbitrarily detained](#) Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the designated sermon-giver at Jamia Masjid, Srinagar. He has been under house arrest for most of the last several years and generally denied the right to lead his congregation in religious services, including Friday prayers.

On March 31, 2024, the Indian authorities [detained three individuals](#), Faisal Ahmad Kachroo of Baba Yousuf, Sopore, Aquib Mehraj Kana of Sangrama, Sopore, and Adil Akber Gojree of Kushal Matoo, Sopore, for allegedly being “over ground workers.”

On March 4, 2024, the High Court of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh [ordered](#) the release of Umar Aijaz Mir of Bandipora who was detained under the PSA in 2022 and is being held at Barely Central Jail, Uttar Pradesh.

## **POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DISEMPOWERMENT, AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE**

Indian government banned several pro-self-determination political parties

On March 9, 2024, the Indian government granted sub-national authorities powers to persecute [three banned groups](#): two factions of the Muslim Conference and Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir.

On March 12, 2024, the Indian government [banned](#) the Jammu Kashmir National Front.

On March 16, 2024, the Indian government [banned](#) Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Freedom League and all factions of the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples League. On that same date, the Indian government extended its [ban](#) on the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front.

At least [nine Kashmiri pro-self-determination groups](#) are currently banned.

Protests for environmental and political rights continued in Ladakh

People in Ladakh have continued [protesting](#) Indian central government rule, [militarization, environmental damage](#) and land acquisition by non-locals, demanding political representation, constitutional protections and safeguards for tribal identity.

Maharashtra approved land purchase for construction of Maharashtra Bhavan

On March 13, 2024, the [Maharashtra Cabinet approved](#) the purchase of land in Srinagar for a guesthouse to facilitate an increased influx of people from Maharashtra to IAK.

## BJP electioneering celebrated disempowerment of Kashmiris.

The BJP continued to [hail the abrogation](#) of Article 370 as its biggest achievement. The disempowerment and demonization of Kashmiris has been central to BJP politics.

## New measures introduced to further disempower Kashmiri Muslims.

On March 22, 2024, the Indian administration of IAK [approved a 10% reservation](#) for predominantly privileged, high-caste Hindu, pro-BJP ethnic groups newly classified as “disempowered.” By law, only 40% of public sector employment positions are available for a majority of the population, including the majority Kashmiri Muslim population. As previously discussed in our [February 2024](#), [July 2024](#) and [August 2024](#) updates, this one of several policies systematically furthering of the disempowerment of Muslims in IAK and the systematic expansion of disproportionate, structural advantages to pro-BJP elements in IAK.

## **DISCRIMINATION TARGETING KASHMIRIS**

### Kashmiri students attacked and expelled from Punjab's CT Institute of Engineering

On March 2, 2024, several [Kashmiri students were attacked](#) in CT Institute of Engineering in Jalandhar. 110 Kashmiri students were expelled.

### Kashmiri students denied religious and cultural rights at Tamil Nadu Medical College

On March 6, 2024, the College of Nursing, Chengalpattu Govt Medical College & Hospital in Tamil Nadu [forced over 20 students](#) from Kashmir to shave their beards in order to enroll.

## **TAKING OF PROPERTY AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY**

### Indian authorities continued their system campaign of property expropriation

Indian authorities [evicted](#) Muslim landowners and bulldozed Muslim houses in Jammu.

Indian authorities have [expropriated prime agricultural land](#), and economically critical apple orchards, forcibly taking Kashmiri farmers' decades of investment and livelihoods in addition to their land in Shopian, for the purpose of a railway expansion. This is example of expropriation, and economic, social, cultural and ecological destruction, in IAK in the name of “development.”

## **IMPUNITY AND LACK OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

### After 28 years of denials, Jameela Begum persevered in her struggle for justice

In 1996, the Jammu and Kashmir Police's Special Operations Group abducted, detained, tortured and killed shopkeeper [Muhammad Ramzan Bhat](#). Like practically every Kashmiri victim, Bhat's family has been denied justice. Unlike practically every Kashmiri victim's family, Bhat's wife Jameela Begum has continued to fight for justice for her husband.

## **PUBLIC STATEMENTS, COMMUNICATIONS, AND REPORTS**

### CPJ, IPI and BBC publicly criticized the continued detention of Aasif Sultan

On March 4, 2024, the [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](#), [International Press Institute \(IPI\)](#) and [BBC](#) expressed alarm over the re-arrest, and continued detention, of Kashmiri journalist Aasif Sultan.

### Call for immediate release of Irfan Mehraj

On March 20, 2024, Amnesty International, FORUM-ASIA, AFAD, CIVICUS, Front Line Defenders, FIDH and OMCT (within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders), Human Rights Watch, ISHR, KLJP and the Martin Ennals Foundation called for the immediate release of journalist and human rights defender [Irfan Mehraj](#) on the first anniversary of his ongoing arbitrary detention.

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