

India: Three years of arbitrary detention of Kashmiri human rights defender Khurram Parvez

November 21, 2024 - On November 22, 2024, Khurram Parvez, a prominent Kashmiri human rights defender, will mark three years of wrongful incarceration on unsubstantiated charges of terrorism and related offences. His arrest is a deliberate act of reprisal for his work documenting severe human rights violations in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir. The continued judicial harassment of Khurram Parvez is a calculated assault on civil society and dissent in Kashmir. We, the undersigned human rights organisations, reiterate our unequivocal calls for Khurram's immediate and unconditional release.

Khurram Parvez has long championed justice and accountability for victims of human rights abuses, at immense personal risk. He is the Coordinator of the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), Chairperson of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), and the Deputy Secretary-General of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). His principled commitment to human rights has earned him widespread international recognition, including the Martin Ennals Award (2023) and the Reebok Human Rights Award (2006). However, his work has consistently been met with systematic retaliation from Indian authorities.

In 2016, Khurram was barred from attending a UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva and subsequently detained under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act for 76 days—a preventive detention law widely criticised for violating international legal norms. The Jammu and Kashmir High Court later ruled his detention unlawful, underscoring its arbitrary nature. In October 2020, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) raided the offices of JKCCS, Khurram's residence, and other locations, just months after JKCCS published a report detailing the human rights impact of Kashmir's communications blockade.

On November 22, 2021, this campaign of repression intensified when Khurram was arrested by the NIA, on politically motivated charges under India's Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) of 1967—an anti-terror law notoriously used to persecute activists and dissenters. Currently held in Rohini Jail in New Delhi, Khurram has been repeatedly denied bail, subjected to prolonged pre-trial detention, and slapped with additional charges in March 2023, linked to a First Information Report filed in 2020. Irfan Mehraj, a Kashmiri journalist and human rights defender associated with JKCCS, remains detained on similar charges. Others linked to JKCCS continue to face harassment, including frequent summons and interrogations.

As we mark the third anniversary of Khurram's detention, we are reminded of the ongoing systemic repression in Kashmir. Since the revocation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution in 2019, which stripped Jammu and Kashmir of its special constitutional status, human rights violations have escalated, and civil liberties have been severely curtailed, as also documented in the 2024 FIDH report. The abrogation has furthered state repression, facilitating the unlawful targeting of human rights defenders like Khurram and perpetuating a climate of fear.

We are in solidarity with Khurram Parvez, his family, his colleagues, and all human rights defenders in Kashmir. We demand his immediate and unconditional release, the cessation of all retaliatory actions against him and JKCCS, and a guarantee of protection from further reprisals. We call on the Indian authorities to uphold their international human rights obligations, cease the criminalisation of human rights work, and allow Khurram Parvez to return home without delay.

Signatories



1. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
2. Kashmir Law and Justice Project (KLJP)
3. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
4. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
5. Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)
6. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders