



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

March 1, 2023 - March 31, 2023

### SUMMARY

In March 2023, Indian authorities continued to commit grave human rights violations in Indian-administered Kashmir (IAK). Indian forces committed at least three extrajudicial killings, including one along the Line of Control. In addition, Indian authorities claimed to recover the mutilated corpse of Abdul Rashid Dar whom Indian forces abducted and forcibly disappeared in December 2022. Additionally, the Jammu & Kashmir administration continued its repression of the freedom of expression and violations of the social, economic, cultural, and political rights of Kashmiris. The administration continued its escalated campaign of expropriation and systematic dispossession of locals' property through pretextual "anti-encroachment" drives.

Two developments involving the Indian central government are expected to contribute to continued grave violations in IAK. First, the Indian Supreme Court ruled that mere membership in an association deemed unlawful by Indian authorities is sufficient grounds for prosecution under India's counterterror laws. Second, in a time of heightened concern regarding state surveillance and the extensive buildout of the surveillance state in IAK, Indian authorities are actively procuring alternatives to the NSO Group's Pegasus software – which is known to have been used by Indian authorities to surveil human rights defenders.

Indian authorities intensified their repression of human rights work in IAK through the arrest of human rights defender Irfan Mehraj and a second arrest of human rights defender Khurram Parvez. These arrests come after longstanding and ongoing harassment of human rights defenders, including many associated with the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) which was, prior to its incapacitation through harassment and raids in October 2020, the leading human rights organization in IAK. This case against JKCCS is unique in that it criminalizes a leading human rights organization for doing human rights work per se, as "anti-national," with profound implications for human rights defense in IAK and in India. As presented by Indian authorities, the case includes in its ambit a vast network of actors in IAK including victims of human rights violations, their families, and people who sought to document or seek accountability for human rights violations, including journalists and scholars, in India and internationally, including international human rights groups, scholars and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. *The [Kashmir Scholars Network \(KSCAN\)](#) has published a [statement regarding these arrests](#). Please consider adding your organization's endorsement and/or your individual signature in solidarity and support of this statement. Individual scholars, journalists, and activists may add their signatures using [this Google form](#). Organizations should email [kashmirscholarsnetwork@protonmail.com](mailto:kashmirscholarsnetwork@protonmail.com) to add their institutional endorsements. The published letter will be updated accordingly.*

Finally, numerous Kashmiri journalists, human rights defenders, political activists, and dissenters continue to be arbitrarily detained. In a case emblematic of the repression against Kashmiri journalists, Aasif Sultan, arbitrarily detained on August 27, 2018, remains illegally imprisoned. As of the date of this publication, Sultan has been detained for 1,689 days. In a case emblematic of the repression against Kashmiri human rights defenders and civil society, Khurram Parvez, arbitrarily detained on November 22, 2021, remains illegally imprisoned in a maximum-security facility in New Delhi. As of the date of this publication, Parvez has been detained for 510 days. **Due to ongoing repression by Indian authorities, key developments in the human rights situation in IAK have likely gone unreported.**

## **KILLINGS AND EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE**

### Extrajudicial killing of Aqib Musthaq Bhat and Aijaz Ahmad Bhat

On February 28, 2023, [Indian authorities reported extrajudicially killing two individuals](#) identified as Aqib Mushtaq Bhat and Aijaz Ahmad Bhat.

### Extrajudicial killing near the Line of Control

On March 24, 2023, Indian forces reportedly killed an “unidentified infiltrator” along the Line of Control in the Kupwara District. Individuals killed by Indian forces near the Line of Control are frequently civilians labeled as “infiltrators” or “intruders” such as in the [case of Tabarak Hussain](#).

### Custodial killings of Kashmiri prisoners continue

[Reports indicate](#) that at least four Kashmiri prisoners have been killed in Kupwara Jail, one of 14 jails in IAK, since July 2021. At least two of the individuals were reportedly tortured and killed through the denial of adequate healthcare in Kupwara Jail: Mohammad Yousuf Bhat and Lateef Ahmad Mir. In at least two recent cases of prominent Kashmiri political activists – [Altaf Shah](#) who was killed on October 10, 2022 and [Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai](#) who was killed on May 5, 2021 – custodial torture through the denial of adequate healthcare resulted in a custodial killing.

## **VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION**

On March 24, 2023, the Indian [Supreme Court held](#) that mere membership in an association deemed unlawful by Indian authorities constituted a criminal offense under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). The UAPA, India’s leading counterterrorism law, [violates](#) international rules and norms. While it is not the only or most widely used state security law in IAK, Indian authorities have used the UAPA to [suppress all forms of dissent](#) in IAK and [arbitrarily detain](#) thousands of Kashmiris. Kashmiris are disproportionately targeted under the UAPA: in 2020, the people of IAK represented 1.04% of the population subject to the UAPA and [26.19% of those arrested](#) under the UAPA. Indian authorities have declared popular, representative associations and groups in IAK unlawful under the UAPA, including [Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir](#) (Jel), a leading Islamic socio-religious movement founded in 1953, and [Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front](#), a leading pro-self-determination party, in 2019.

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

### Delhi Police forcibly cancel Gandhi Peace Foundation seminar on media blackout in Kashmir

[Delhi police forced the cancellation of an event](#) to be held by the Gandhi Peace Foundation on March 15, 2023 to discuss media blackouts and state repression in Kashmir. Police told the Foundation's secretary to cancel the event and barricaded the Foundation's gates. The Foundation was founded by Jawaharlal Nehru, among others, and has regularly hosted seminars on various topics without obtaining or being asked to obtain permission from Delhi Police. While similar gatherings and seminars have long been prohibited and criminalized in IAK, the forcible cancellation of a Gandhi Peace Foundation event in Delhi discussing violations in IAK is widely understood as an escalation of censorship and denial of the right of free expression regarding IAK.

#### A NYT Op-ed on press freedom triggers backlash from BJP

A March 8, 2023 [op-ed in \*The New York Times\*](#) by [Anuradha Bhasin](#), the Executive Editor of *The Kashmir Times*, an historic and well-regarded news organization in IAK targeted by Indian authorities for repression, described how the Modi government's "repressive media policies are destroying Kashmiri journalism, intimidating media outlets into serving as government mouthpieces and creating an information vacuum in our region of about 13 million people, noting that the government is "taking steps that could replicate this disturbing model on a national scale." Bhasin concluded, "The media stands as one of the last remaining institutions capable of preventing India's descent into authoritarianism. But if Mr. Modi succeeds in introducing the Kashmir model of information control to the rest of the country, it won't be just press freedom that is at risk, but Indian democracy itself." Bhasin is currently a John S. Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford University.

India's government publicly responded to Bhasin's op-ed, on March 10, 2023 through Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur who [accused](#) the New York Times of "spreading lies" about India. Thakur said: "New York Times had long back dropped all pretensions of neutrality while publishing anything about India. NYT's so-called opinion piece on freedom of press in Kashmir is mischievous and fictitious, published w/ a sole motive to spread a [sic] propaganda about India and its democratic institutions and values.... This is in continuation with what NYT and a few other link-minded [sic] foreign media have been spreading lies about India and our democratically elected Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji. Such lies can't last long.... Some foreign media nourishing a grudge against India and our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi have long been systematically trying to peddle lies about our democracy and pluralistic society." The head of the BJP's IT department, Amit Malviya, also [said](#): "Foreign media, with their jaundiced view of India, no longer either have the credibility or the heft to comment on India's internal matters or, for that matter, its achievements."

#### **REPRESSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND JOURNALISTS**

##### Journalist Fahad Shah and Scholar Aala Fazili charged with sedition

[On March 16, 2023](#), a special Indian counterterrorism court framed sedition charges against Kashmiri journalist Fahad Shah and Kashmiri scholar Abdul Aala Fazili in connection with an op-ed written by Fazili and published on Shah's digital media platform, *The Kashmir Walla*, in 2011. The court found that they were "glorifying militancy and secessionist ideology." The State Investigation Agency (SIA) [claims](#) *The Kashmir Walla* is a "well directed conspiracy" in the "terrorist and separatist ecosystem."

The Jammu & Kashmir administration's SIA had previously [charged](#) them under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the UAPA. Fazili was arrested on April 17, 2022 for authoring the op-ed which the SIA claims is "highly provocative and seditious." Shah was [arrested](#) on February 4, 2022 for his journalism. He faces

[charges](#) of sedition and inciting violence under the UAPA for “posting anti-national content which has a multidimensional adverse impact on sovereignty and unity of country.” He was subsequently bailed out twice and [immediately re-arrested](#). He was [denied bail](#) in July 2022.

The SIA is further seeking to criminalize subscription models for journalism. Through the [systematic harassment](#) of journalists and the implementation and enforcement of coercive censorship [policies](#) which experts have called [Orwellian](#), independent media have largely ceased to operate in IAK. The few outlets that continue to operate are doing so through a subscription model. In connection with the Shah case, the SIA is [investigating](#) how “[U]nscrupulous elements can utilise this route to fund an entity to foment trouble in a region and carry out propaganda in its own interest.” The SIA has further [claimed](#) that a leading international press freedom organization, Reporters Without Borders, which has reported on violations of press freedom in IAK “is an organisation which supports press freedom all over the world, while in reality the entity is involved in subverting the democratic freedoms all over the world.”

#### Human rights defenders Irfan Mehraj and Khurram Parvez arrested in connection with targeting of JKCCS

On [March 20, 2023, Irfan Mehraj](#), a Kashmiri human rights defender and journalist, was asked to “[stop by](#)” the National Investigation Agency (NIA) office in Srinagar, where he was subsequently arrested under the IPC and the UAPA in a case targeting the leading human rights organization in IAK, JKCCS. Mehraj was [forcibly taken to Delhi](#) shortly thereafter. He is [facing a possible life sentence](#). For more background on Mehraj and his work, see [The Wire](#).

International experts and NGOs [widely criticized](#) the arrest. Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, [tweeted](#) that she was “deeply concerned” about the arrest and called for his immediate release. Lawlor also [issued a press release](#) asking India to “end its crackdown against Kashmiri human rights defenders.” Alviina Alametsa, a member of the European Parliament, [shared](#) “deep concern about the ever worsening situation for human rights defenders in India.” [Amnesty International called](#) for Mehraj’s immediate release. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders [condemned](#) the arrest. On March 22, 2023, a statement on behalf of FORUM-ASIA, Amnesty International, CIVICUS, Human Rights Watch, FIDH, International Service for Human Rights and OMCT called attention to Mehraj’s arrest and asked the Council to take action.

Khurram Parvez, who was already arbitrarily detained in a maximum security prison in Delhi in another case, was [also arrested in connection with the case](#). Parvez is a [celebrated human rights defender](#) and was named a Martin Ennals Award recipient, the Nobel Prize for human rights, for 2023.

The case in which Mehraj and Parvez were arrested targets JKCCS as a human rights organization. On March 21, 2023, an NIA spokesman [stated](#) that “JKCCS was funding terror activities in the valley and had also been in the propagation of a secessionist agenda in the Valley under the garb of protection of human rights.” The case explicitly criminalizes human rights documentation and reporting under counterterror laws as “anti-national and incriminating material to bring into hatred, contempt and disaffection towards the Government of India.”

Several other human rights defenders, journalists and scholars have been harassed, surveilled, intimidated and threatened in connection with this case and additional arrests are possible. Both the framing of the case by the NIA and the framing of state-aligned media seeks to cast a broad, transnational net by positing a global “[separatist intellectual ecosystem](#)” and “[separatist-terrorist](#)

[ecosystem](#)” with JKCCS at its heart and that includes UN human rights experts, international human rights organizations, journalists, scholars and others. This exemplifies the Government of India’s long-standing and continually escalating pattern of legalizing repression to suppress human rights work, civil society, freedom of information, free expression and dissent. The NIA’s current tactics effectively criminalize wide swathes of Kashmiri society, including victims of human rights violations and their families, as well as international actors who seek to defend human rights in IAK.

## **EXPROPRIATION OR OCCUPATION OF LAND, TAKING OR DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY**

Indian authorities continued to raid and expropriate property and collectively punish the families of Kashmiri dissidents

On March 2, 2023, the NIA expropriated the familial home of [Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar](#) (aka Latram) in Srinagar. Zargar was arrested in 1992 for engaging in armed resistance in support of the Kashmiri self-determination movement. He was released from prison and exiled in 1999 and allegedly resides in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Indian authorities designated him a “terrorist” under the UAPA in April 2022.

On March 4, 2023, the NIA expropriated [properties that they claim were linked to Kashmiri exile Bashir Ahmad Peer](#) who was assassinated on February 20, 2023 in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. No one claimed responsibility for the assassination.

On March 13, 2023, the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) expropriated [the home of Mohammad Ishaq Malik](#) for purported involvement in militant activities.

On March 17, 2023, the Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir confirmed an order expropriating the [property of Mohammad Abdullah Mir](#) for purportedly providing logistics and shelter to “militants.”

On March 20, 2023, [police attached the houses](#) of Abdul Majeed Reshi and Mohammad Jamal Malik in Bandipora District for harboring and providing logistical support to “militants.”

Indian authorities also continued to target Jel. On March 12, 2023, [11 Jel properties](#), estimated at ₹90 crore (almost \$11 million), were seized. The SIA has reportedly identified another 200 Jel properties across Jammu & Kashmir subject to expropriation.

All such expropriations occur without due process or meaningful recourse and are a form of collective punishment for dissent with broad implications for Kashmiris’ ability to defend their human rights and the disempowerment of Kashmiris.

The Jammu & Kashmir administration continued its ongoing campaign of mass property expropriation and demolitions

On March 19, 2023, Manoj Sinha, the Indian-appointed chief executive of Jammu & Kashmir, [announced](#) the “encroachment drives” will continue despite widespread protests (which are made despite severe state repression and grave threat of reprisals). Hindu supremacists have championed the bulldozer as a symbol of domination over Muslims and celebrated their use to [destroy the homes of Indian Muslims who dare to stand for their rights](#). In IAK, the BJP-appointed government is using bulldozers to demolish homes and livelihoods without warning, process, notice or meaningful recourse.

*For more background about the history and import of land ownership and policy in Jammu & Kashmir see [“From ‘land to the tiller’ to land to the highest bidder: Land grabs in Jammu and Kashmir.”](#) For more information, on the ongoing expropriation and demolition drives in IAK, see **KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN INDIAN-ADMINISTERED KASHMIR** for February 1 to February 28, 2023 and January 1, 2023 to January 31, 2023.*

## **POLITICAL DISEMPOWERMENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE**

### New bills proposed to further political disempowerment of Muslims in Jammu & Kashmir

The Indian government has proposed several new [quota bills](#) to structurally advantage pro-BJP interests in Jammu & Kashmir and continue to further the political and economic disempowerment of Muslims in IAK and particularly the majority Kashmiri Muslim community – the community that has been most ardent in defending human and democratic rights in IAK, including the right to self-determination. Historically, the Kashmir region was disadvantaged by quota rules (relative to the Jammu and Ladakh regions). In recent years, various policies and processes including blatant [gerrymandering](#) of constituencies have furthered that structural disempowerment.

These new bills privilege the Pahari community, a core BJP constituency, the beneficiaries of other [recent BJP-led efforts](#) to disproportionately advantage and empower them and an important swing community in several districts. They also empower non-local, BJP-supporting communities like the Valmiki, West Pakistani and Gorkha communities with preferred quota/reservation status, furthering the process of forced demographic change in IAK. These initiatives build on other related, recent BJP-led efforts, including the legalization of the denial of the [right of return](#) of Muslim refugees and political exiles from IAK; [denying](#) Muslims born Pakistan-administered Kashmir the right to vote; “indigenizing” [non-local Hindus](#) through new “domicile” rules; and registering [hundreds of thousands](#) of new, non-local Hindu voters. These bills have been described by local observers as “social engineering.” Among the consequences to-date (prior to new proposed policies taking effect) is that of the 181 recent selections for prestigious and economically rewarding civil service positions in Jammu & Kashmir, [only 32 were from Kashmir](#), although Kashmiris are a majority of the population.

### Construction continues on militarized colonial settlements in IAK

Indian authorities reported that [nearly 160 flats](#) reserved for Kashmiri Pandits who left IAK prior to 2019 will be completed by the end of March. These settlements are one aspect of the ongoing expansion of colonial settlements in IAK which India’s military has for decades constructed and expanded. In addition, these flats are part of a Hindu supremacist policy project that casts demands for human and democratic rights in IAK as an Islamo-fascist, anti-Hindu campaign. According to this logic, Pandits need to live in militarized bases, unlike thousands of Pandits who continue to live throughout IAK, many of whom never left.

### Political activists’ homes raided

On March 9, 2023, the Jammu & Kashmir administration's Enforcement Directorate [raided the houses](#) of pro-self-determination political activists Qazi Yasir (Hurriyat) and Zaffar Bhat (Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement). Indian authorities have declared popular, representative associations and groups

in IAK unlawful, including Jel and the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, under the UAPA. Indian authorities have illegally imprisoned every prominent Kashmiri pro-self-determination political activist.

## **ECONOMIC DISEMPOWERMENT**

### Delayed police verification continues to violate Kashmiris' right to work and right to travel

Since 2021, Indian authorities have escalated the systematic [denial of passports](#), government services and employment to Kashmiris on the basis of an adverse police report for acts including civil disobedience and dissent. The consequence has been that hundreds of Kashmiris have been [denied passports and employment opportunities](#) due to delayed or missing police verification. Police verification processes have resulted in widespread violations of Kashmiris' right to work and right to travel.

### Groundbreaking ceremony takes place for major foreign investment project by Government of Dubai-controlled entity in IAK

On March 19, 2023, Manoj Sinha, the Indian-appointed chief executive of Jammu & Kashmir, performed the [groundbreaking ceremony](#) for an estimated ₹500 crore (approximately US\$60 million) Emaar Properties multipurpose commercial real estate project near Srinagar. Known for developing Burj Khalifa, Emaar is a multinational real estate development company, and its largest and controlling shareholder is the Government of Dubai. This is the first foreign direct investment in Jammu & Kashmir since the abrogation. The project has been pursued in close collaboration with the BJP-led government and in support of the BJP's claims to "normalcy" and "development" in Jammu & Kashmir – a successful disinformation campaign that obscures the longstanding reality of grave violations and impunity for those violations in IAK. Emaar's project is an investment in illegally occupied territory in support of the state illegally occupying that territory, in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. It also benefits and furthers the post-July 2019 campaign to dispossess and disempower locals in favor of non local-parties aligned with the Indian government.

## **ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE**

### Abdul Rashid Dar, victim of December 2022 enforced disappearance, confirmed killed

Jammu & Kashmir administration authorities delivered the [mutilated corpse](#) of Abdul Rashid Dar, who was [abducted](#) from his home and involuntarily disappeared in December 2022 by the Indian army's 41 Rashtriya Rifles unit. As is frequently the case in circumstances of custodial killings, the army claimed Dar escaped from custody. *For more information on this case, see **KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN INDIAN-ADMINISTERED KASHMIR** for November 1 to December 31, 2022.*

### International Women's Day draws attention to enforced disappearances in Kashmir

For International Women's Day on March 8th, 2023, Mary Aileen Diez-Bacalso, president of the International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances, wrote [an op-ed](#) drawing attention to the women victims in enforced disappearances in IAK. Bacalso noted that "The decades-long occupation of Jammu & Kashmir by the Indian military has resulted in approximately 8,000 enforced disappearances." She worked in IAK with female family members of victims of enforced disappearance including "half-widows," women who were married to disappeared men, of which there are approximately 1,500. She

wrote: “Swinging between hope and despair, they showed me pictures of their disappeared loved ones and every piece of document of their children’s disappearance. Etched on their faces is a grief beyond description and hope that one day, they would see their disappeared loved ones again.... In a psychosocial accompaniment session of the Association of Family Members of the Disappeared, entitled ‘Healing Wounds, Mending Scars,’ these women profoundly expressed their common sufferings due to an uncertain loss, their difficult struggle to make both ends meet, their longing for truth and justice and their thirst for solidarity.”

## **STATE SURVEILLANCE**

### Indian authorities procuring alternatives to Pegasus spyware

[Reports indicate](#) the Indian government is actively looking for spyware to replace its Pegasus system. Pegasus, made by Israel’s NSO group, has been widely used by states to illegally surveil and harrass human rights defenders and dissidents. Although the Indian government has [never admitted using Pegasus](#), its malware has been found on the phones of Indian critics, including journalists and opposition leaders. Indian authorities are known to have used [Pegasus](#) on Kashmiri targets as part of a sophisticated system of technological [surveillance](#), including [CCTV](#) and [facial recognition systems](#).

## **VIOLATIONS OF PRISONER RIGHTS**

### Prisons in Jammu & Kashmir are overcrowded and lack access to medical care

The [14 jails and prisons in the J&K region](#) can hold a total capacity of 3,629 individuals. However, reports indicate that over 5,300 individuals are currently being detained. Additionally, individuals lack sufficient access to medical care, and at least two have died as a result. In 2021, there was only one medical staff member for every 65 detained or imprisoned individuals.

## **VIOLATIONS OF RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

### Indian army installs flag as a tribute to Indian soldiers

On [March 9, 2023](#), the Indian army unfurled an Indian flag in the Chenab valley region as a tribute to fallen soldiers. The flag can be seen for miles. The coerced and prominent [display](#) of symbols of Indian nationalism is a prominent feature of the projection of Indian domination and ongoing erasure of local history and culture in IAK.

### Four Islamic clerics and three activists detained under the Public Safety Act

The SIA [conducted raids on eight places](#) allegedly connected to Maulvi Sarjan Barkati. Barkati is a prominent Islamic religious cleric and senior leader of Ummat e Islami, an Islamic socio-religious organization founded in 1985 and headquartered at Islamabad, Anantnag. Barkati has repeatedly been subject to arbitrary detention, including in [September 2022](#) as part of Indian authorities’ escalated campaign against independent religious thought and dissent targeting Islamic scholars, Muslim religious leaders and *imams*. For more background on the detention and repression of Barkati as well as other Islamic clerics, see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

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



### Army captain court martialed for staging a fake encounter

[Captain Bhoopendra Singh](#) of the Army's 62 Rashtriya Rifles was court martialed for his involvement in the Amishpora fake encounter. On July 18, 2020, the Indian army [announced](#) it had killed three suspected "Pakistani terrorists" during a counterinsurgency operation in Amshipora after receiving [specific input](#) about the presence of terrorists in the area. Per their practice, the army buried those extrajudicially killed in a remote area. The three killed were migrant laborers from Rajouri District, Imtiyaz Ahmad (age 20), Ibrer Ahmad (age 16) and Mohammed Ibrar (age 25). They were abducted, disappeared, executed and their bodies disposed of while the Indian army claimed the "successful" killing of "terrorists." These killings are consistent with a long history of such killings in IAK. Despite widespread, grave violations over decades, no Indian soldier has been meaningfully punished for violations in IAK. In the rare instances, such as this one, where any meaningful investigation occurred, soldiers only rarely have faced a court martial (i.e., no civilian prosecutions) and in those cases sentences were [later suspended](#). In the present case, the sentence issued by the military court is ["subject to confirmation by higher army authorities."](#)

### **DISINFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA**

#### Indian authorities claim UN High Commissioner Volker Turk was "factually inaccurate" about Kashmir

On March 7, 2023, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker [Turk specifically mentioned the ongoing human rights abuses in Kashmir](#) during a speech to delegates attending the U.N. Human Rights Council. [In response](#), Indra Mani Pandey, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the UN, stated, "we regret the High Commissioner's unwarranted and factually inaccurate portrayal of the human rights situation in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Let me reiterate that the matters pertaining to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are an internal affair of India and we do not see any role for the OHCHR in it."

### **DISCRIMINATION AGAINST KASHMIRIS IN INDIA**

#### Kashmiri students harassed for praying

Hindu supremacist [groups were enraged](#) and demanded action after a video of Kashmiri students praying on the campus of Sanskriti University in Uttar Pradesh circulated on social media. They demanded action against the students and threatened to perform a "purification" ritual on the campus if the university failed to take action. The university asked students to pray in their hostels.

#### One Kashmiri young man was detained in Bihar for "suspicious" behavior

[Nasir Waza](#), a resident of the Budgam district of central Kashmir, was detained in Bihar's Katihar for "roaming suspiciously" based on reports by local residents in Bihar of "suspicious activity detected through intelligence-based input." Waza was interrogated by local police and "other security agencies." He reportedly "confessed" to having visited foreign countries and staying in the Katihar railway station for a few hours.

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

Civicus, a global civil society alliance, [rated India's civic freedoms](#) as “repressed” for 2022 in its latest report, [People Power Under Attack 2022](#). The [section discussing India](#) points specifically to India’s use of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to detain students and human rights defenders such as Khurram Parvez.

The New York Times published [India Is Arming Villagers in One of Earth's Most Militarized Places](#), an article about India’s revival of armed vigilante groups in IAK. The article frames the decision as a response to attacks on Hindus in the region (consistent with the rhetoric of the Jammu & Kashmir administration), though it notes the history of human rights abuses associated with such groups in IAK.

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