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India: UN expert demands immediate end to crackdown on Kashmiri human rights defenders

GENEVA (24 March 2023) – India must immediately end its crackdown against Kashmiri human rights defenders, a UN expert said today, after renowned Kashmiri human rights defender Khurram Parvez was arrested in a second case on terrorism charges.

“Indian authorities appear to be intensifying the long-standing repression of Kashmiri civil society,” said Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. “The State must respect its human rights obligations and be held accountable where it violates them.”

On 22 March 2023, Khurram Parvez, [already detained](#) since November 2021 on accusations of terrorism, was arrested in a second case after two days of interrogation by the National Investigation Agency, India's main counter-terrorism body. He is accused of financing terrorism under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, through his work with the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS).

Prior to Parvez's arrest, a former associate of the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies (JKCCS), human rights defender and journalist Irfan Mehraj, was arrested in the same case on 20 March 2023 from Srinagar and immediately transferred to New Delhi. Former associates and volunteers of the JKCCS are facing coercion and intimidation from the authorities.

“The Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) carries out essential work monitoring human rights. Their research and analysis of

human rights violations are of huge value, including to international organisations seeking to ensure accountability and non-repetition of abuses,” Lawlor said.

UN experts have repeatedly highlighted grave concerns regarding the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which allows the designation of any individual as a ‘terrorist’, bypassing the requirement to establish membership or association with banned groups. The Act is applied as a means of coercion against civil society, the media, and human rights defenders in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir.

The expert called for the release and the closing of the investigations against Kashmiri human rights defenders.

“Time and time again, the Government has been called upon to address the fundamental issues with the country’s anti-terrorism framework and its misuse to smear and silence human rights defenders,” Lawlor said. “The arrest and detention of persons for exercising their human rights are arbitrary. There must be accountability and remedy where such abusive actions are taken.”

***The expert: Ms. Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders**

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UN expert calls on Indian government to end its crackdown on human rights defenders in Kashmir

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