

30 October 2020

India: National Investigation Agency raids NGOs and human rights defenders' homes in Kashmir

On 28 October 2020, officials from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) raided the offices and homes of several human rights organisations and human rights defenders in Kashmir, India. Among those targeted were woman human rights defender **Parveena Ahanger** and human rights defender **Khurram Parvez**. Media reports indicate that the raids are an attempt to stigmatise and persecute the defenders based on fabricated charges and without basis.

Parveena Ahanger is a woman human rights defender and the Chairperson of the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDPK). She is an active advocate against enforced disappearances and has been at the forefront in demanding justice for victims of violence in Jammu and Kashmir. Ahanger was [awarded](#) the Rafto prize in 2017 by the Rafto Foundation in Norway, for her work helping victims of human rights abuses. [Khurram Parvez](#) is the Chairperson of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), a collective of 13 non-governmental organisations from ten Asian countries that campaign on the issue of enforced disappearances. He is also the Program Coordinator of the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), which is a coalition of campaign, research and advocacy organisations based in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir which monitor and investigate human right abuses.

On 28 September 2020, the NIA, assisted by the local police and Central Reserve Police forces, raided the offices and homes of several human rights defenders in Kashmir, including that of human rights defenders Parveena Ahanger and Khurram Parvez. The officials seized several of their official documents and electronic devices, including their phones. No items have thus far been returned by the authorities. Reports from media sources say that the NIA claim that the defenders and their organisations have been involved in “funding terrorism”.

Front Line Defenders expresses serious concern about the ongoing harassment and intimidation of Parveena Ahanger, Khurram Parvez and their fellow human rights defenders in Kashmir. It believes that allegations of “funding terrorism” are baseless and have been construed to intimidate those working on human rights in the extremely hostile environment. Documenting human rights abuses and advocating on behalf of victims of human rights violations, should never be criminalised or suppressed. Front Line Defenders is extremely concerned for the safety of the defenders targeted in the raids and believes that the conduct of Indian authorities is in direct reprisal for their peaceful human rights work and advocacy.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in India to:

1. Immediately cease all further intimidation and harassment of Parveena Ahanger, Khurram Parvez and their colleagues, and return the items seized from them, as Front Line Defenders believes that the raid was carried out to intimidate them for their legitimate work in defence of human rights;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in India are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions.