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India: Human rights defender Khurram Parvez arrested by the National Investigation Agency under trumped up charges

On 22 March 2023, a court in New Delhi remanded human rights defender **Khurram Parvez** to the custody of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for ten days in relation to a new case filed against him. Khurram Parvez has been incarcerated for over a year at the Rohini High Security Prison in New Delhi since his arrest under a separate First Information Report (FIR) on 22 November 2021. The latest case against Khurram Parvez was registered by the NIA in October 2020 following a raid at his office the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) alleging non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of serious offences including criminal conspiracy and terror funding.

[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 JKCCS, which is a coalition of various campaign, research and advocacy organisations based in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir that monitor and investigate human rights abuses. He was recently awarded the prestigious Martin Ennals Award in February 2023.

On 22 March 2023, Khurram Parvez was produced before a special NIA judge at the Patiala House court in New Delhi for the first time since his arbitrary arrest and detention on 22 November 2021 under a separate case. He was remanded to ten days of NIA custody along with Kashmiri journalist [Irfan Mehraj](#), who was also arrested in the same case on 20 March 2023. The case First Information Report (FIR) No RC-37/2020, against Khurram Parvez and Irfan Mehraj was registered in October 2020 under Sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 124-A (inciting disaffection towards government through words, signs, etc.) of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) sections 17 (fund raising for terror activities), 18 (conspiracy to commit terror act), 22A & 22C (relating to offences committed by registered companies), 38 (offence relating to membership of a terrorist organisation), 39 (supporting a terrorist organisation) and 40 (raising funds for a terrorist organisation).

According to a press release by the NIA on 21 March 2023, Irfan Mehraj was stated to be a close associate of human rights defender Khurram Parvez. Front Line Defenders was reliably informed that the NIA interrogated Khurram Parvez for two consecutive days in the Rohini High Security Prison in New Delhi the week previous. They had threatened him with arrest in relation to this case from October 2020, and with arrests of his other colleagues and associates. There is a very serious risk of other human rights defenders associated with JKCCS being targeted as reprisal for their links to Khurram and peaceful human rights work.

Khurram Parvez's arbitrary arrest and detention in November 2021 was widely condemned by UN experts and human rights organisations. On 22 November 2021, the NIA raided Khurram Parvez's house and office for approximately 14 hours, seizing his and his family members' laptops, mobile phone, and books. After the raid, he was arrested by the NIA on the basis of a FIR lodged on 6 November 2021. Khurram Parvez was charged under the Indian Penal Code and the UAPA. On 13 May 2022, the NIA filed a preliminary charge sheet before the NIA Special Court in New Delhi and accused Khurram Parvez of "running a network of over ground workers of the Pakistan-based armed militant organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), for furthering activities of LeT and to commit terrorist attacks in India". His detention has been extended at least five times by the NIA Special

Court in New Delhi under Section 43D(2)(b) of the UAPA, which allows for the extension of the detention period for up to 180 days if the investigating agency is unable to complete the investigation of a case within a 90-day period.

Indian authorities have repeatedly targeted the human rights defender for his work in Kashmir. In 2016, he was detained for over two months and blocked from travelling to the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the continued persecution of human rights defender Khurram Parvez including his ongoing incarceration and the fresh case under UAPA brought against him in 2023. Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the increasing harassment of activists and journalists in Kashmir and calls on the authorities in India to immediately and unconditionally release Khurram Parvez and quash the fabricated charges against him.

Front Line Defenders calls upon the Indian authorities to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Khurram Parvez as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Khurram Parvez, as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the arrest of Khurram Parvez with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards.

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