

Kashmiri journalist and human rights defender Irfan Mehraj held for three-years in pre-trial detention

19 March 2026

As journalist and human rights defender Irfan Mehraj marks three years in arbitrary detention tomorrow, we the undersigned civil society organizations call for his immediate and unconditional release. We continue to stand in solidarity with Irfan and his family. Our organisations also demand an end to the Indian government's continued repression of human rights defenders and journalists in Jammu and Kashmir.

On 20 March 2023, [Irfan Mehraj](#) was [detained](#) by India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) under provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on politically motivated and fabricated charges. According to the NIA, Irfan Mehraj was [arrested](#) for being 'a close associate of Khurram Parvez'. [Khurram Parvez](#) is a HRD and the Program Coordinator of the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), a leading civil society organisation in Jammu and Kashmir. Indian authorities continue to arbitrarily detain Khurram Parvez for over four years now on politically motivated and fabricated charges.

The ongoing detentions of Irfan Mehraj and Khurram Parvez highlight a broader pattern of persecution of human rights defenders and journalists in Jammu and Kashmir.

The authorities have used the UAPA – a draconian anti-terror law - and the repressive Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA), which permits long-term detention without trial, to criminalise and silence journalists and human rights defenders in Jammu and Kashmir. This has worsened since the unilateral [abrogation](#) of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood in August 2019.

In recent months, the police continued to harass and intimidate journalists from Indian-administered Kashmir for their reporting, including through [summoning](#) them for repeated police interrogations and demanding that journalists [sign](#) a [bond](#) undertaking that they will not do anything that would 'disturb peace'.

The Indian government has continuously failed to respond to concerns regarding human rights violations in Kashmir raised by [United Nations experts](#) and international human rights organisations. India should respect its international human rights obligations and end its reprisal against human rights defenders and journalists, especially in Jammu and Kashmir. Other countries at the UN Human Rights Council should address these flagrant violations by a sitting member state.

Our organisations urge the Indian authorities to repeal repressive laws including the UAPA and the PSA and to create an enabling environment for civil society and the media to freely and independently operate in Jammu and Kashmir.

As India continues to work towards securing stronger multilateral and bilateral relations, we call on the international community to urge the Indian government to comply with its international human rights obligations, release Irfan Mehraj, Khurram Parvez and all other detained Kashmiri human rights defenders and end its repression in Jammu and Kashmir.

Signed by:

- Afghanistan Democracy and Development Organization
- ALTSEAN-Burma
- Amnesty International
- Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)
- Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
- CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
- Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN)
- Committee to Project Journalists (CPJ)
- Community Self Reliance Centre
- Defence of Human Rights Pakistan
- Front Line Defenders
- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
- Human Rights Foundation
- Human Rights Watch
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Kashmir Law & Justice Project
- Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law
- KontraS (Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence)
- Korean House for International Solidarity
- Law & Society Trust
- League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI)
- Madaripur Legal Aid Association (MLAA)
- Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN)
- Odhikar
- Public Association “Dignity”
- Redemption Pakistan

- Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU)
- Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
- Taiwan Association for Human Rights
- Think Centre, Singapore
- WOREC
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders