



**Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD)
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
Human Rights Defenders Alert – India (HRDA)
International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED)
Odhikar
The Observatory**

Joint Press Release

Indian authorities prevent Kashmiri human rights defender Khurram Parvez from travelling to Geneva for U.N. Human Rights Council session

Bangkok-Dhaka-Geneva-Madurai-Paris-Quezon City, September 15, 2016 – Our organisations condemn the arbitrary travel ban imposed on Kashmiri human rights defender Mr. Khurram Parvez, who was prohibited from leaving India as he was about to travel to Geneva, Switzerland to participate in the 33rd session of the United Nations' Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

At 1:30 a.m. on September 14, 2016, Mr. **Khurram Parvez** was stopped by immigration officials at the Indira Gandhi International airport in Delhi and prevented from leaving the country to attend the current UNHRC session. Mr. Parvez was detained for one and a half hours at the airport, and subsequently told that the Intelligence Bureau of India had ordered that he was not allowed to travel, despite having an invitation letter and a valid visa to travel to Geneva. Mr. Parvez repeatedly asked for an explanation for why he was being denied the right to travel and asked to see written proof of the orders from the Intelligence Bureau, but the authorities refused to provide him with either. Immigration officers simply told Mr. Parvez that they had instructions that he was not to be 'arrested' but that he should not be allowed to leave the country.

Mr. Parvez is the Chairperson of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) and Program Coordinator of the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS). He was slated to be part of the AFAD & JKCCS delegation visiting Geneva from 14th to 24th September to attend the UNHRC session. While in Geneva, the Kashmiri members of the delegation are scheduled to brief UN bodies including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the concerning situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

In his work with AFAD and JKCCS, Mr. Parvez has consistently highlighted violations of human rights taking place in India, notably in Jammu and Kashmir. In addition to their planned advocacy work at the current UNHRC session, JKCCS has also recently submitted a report to the UN on the role of the Indian authorities in gross human rights violations taking place in Jammu and Kashmir.

By denying Mr. Parvez the right to travel to Geneva to participate at the UNHRC session, the Indian Government is disregarding its obligation to uphold international human rights principles, notably the right of civil society members to be represented and engage with UN mechanisms, as enshrined in the

1998 UN Declaration of human rights defenders and several resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly.¹

It is especially concerning that India is engaging in such repression in the wake of a statement made yesterday by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, wherein he expressed regret at India's lack of cooperation with international human rights mechanisms, particularly with respect to Kashmir. The Government of India continues to out-rightly refuse to give the UN permission to conduct a fact-finding mission in Kashmir, despite widespread accusations of serious human rights violations by security personnel in the region.²

The travel ban imposed on Khurram Parvez is the latest attempt by the Indian Government to censor the human rights situation in Kashmir and to isolate the Kashmiri people, notably human rights defenders working on this important issue. Especially given that India is presently a member of the UN Human Rights Council, the international community cannot stay silent in the face of such disregard of its human rights obligations.

Our organisations condemn the travel ban against Mr. Parvez, and call on the Indian authorities to respect his personal liberty, his right to travel freely, notably to participate in meetings at the UN. Additionally, we demand an end to the harassment of human rights defenders and that the Indian government remove all legal and administrative barriers that impede their legitimate work on human rights. We also call on the international community, notably the other members of the UN Human Rights Council, to insist that India comply with its human rights obligations, including by allowing Indian human rights defenders to freely engage in their work, and by fully cooperating with the UN requests for access to Kashmir and elsewhere in the country.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (The Observatory) was created in 1997 by FIDH and OMCT. The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders. FIDH and OMCT are both members of ProtectDefenders.eu, the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society.

The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD) is a federation of human rights organizations working directly on the issue of involuntary disappearances in Asia. Envisioning a world without desaparecidos, AFAD was founded on June 4, 1998 in Manila, Philippines.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) works towards the radical rethinking and fundamental redesigning of justice institutions in order to protect and promote human rights in Asia. Established in 1984, the Hong Kong based organisation is a Laureate of the Right Livelihood Award 2014.

FORUM-ASIA is a regional human rights group with 58 member organisations in 19 countries across Asia. FORUM-ASIA addresses key areas of human rights violations in the region, including freedoms of expression, assembly and association, human rights defenders, and democratisation. FORUM-ASIA operates through its offices in Bangkok, Jakarta, Geneva and Kathmandu.

Human Rights Defenders Alert – India (HRDA) is a national network of human rights defenders for human rights defenders. HRDA intervenes in the cases of threats/harassment/attack on HRDs and curbing of freedom of expression, assembly and association.

The International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED) is a network of 42 member organisations concerned with the issue of human rights and the struggle against enforced disappearances. The principal objective of ICAED is maximising impact of the activities carried out by

¹ UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/53/144 (8 March 1999) and UN General Assembly Resolution A/C.3/70/L.46/Rev.1 (18 November 2015).

² For more information on recent violence in Kashmir and the denial of UN access, see People's Watch and FIDH joint press release from 18 August 2016 : <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/india/kashmir-un-observers-denied-access-to-investigate-ongoing-human>

its members in favour of an early ratification and effective implementation of the Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances.

Odhikar, a human rights organisation based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, was founded in 1994 with the aim to create a wider monitoring and awareness raising system on the abuse of civil and political rights.

For more information, please contact:

- **AFAD: Mary Aileen D. Bacalso: +63 2 456 6434**
- **AHRC: Md. Ashrafuzzaman: +41 766 382 659 / +852 607 32 807**
- **FIDH: Arthur Manet / Audrey Couprie: + 33143552518**
- **FORUM-ASIA: Anjuman Ara Begum: +977 982 381 5517**
- **HRDA: Mathew Jacob: +91 886 011 0520**
- **ICAED: Mary Aileen D. Bacalso: +63 917 792 4058**
- **Odhikar: Adilur Rahman Khan: + 880 29 88 85 87**
- **OMCT: Delphine Reculeau: +41 22 809 49 34**