

# *Human Rights Defenders Alert - India*

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**November 28, 2011**

**Shri A. K. Parashar**

Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders  
National Human Rights Commission  
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Copernicus Marg  
New Delhi-110001  
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Dear Sir,

*Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action - India - Jammu and Kashmir - Srinagar - Journalists covering protests beaten up and detained by CRPF - Reg*

Greetings from Human Rights Defenders Alert - India!

HRD Alert - India is a Forum of Human Rights Defenders for Human Rights Defenders. It endeavours to initiate actions on behalf of Human Rights Defenders under threat or with security concerns.

We are now writing to express our grave concern over the alleged assault against the photojournalists in Srinagar by the joint team of police and CRPF personnel.

## **Incident**

**Name of the Perpetrators:** Police and CRPF personnel of Jammu & Kashmir

**Place of incident:** Saraf Kadal locality of the Old City of Srinagar

**Date of incident:** 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011

According to the information received the Government forces assaulted and thrashed photojournalist Yawar Kabli, and three others including a video-journalist Umar Mehraj while they were covering stone pelting protests in Saraf Kadal of the Old City of Srinagar on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Two photojournalists and a video journalist were allegedly thrashed by the joint team of police and CRPF personnel and another was detained.

According to the information, three journalists namely Mr. Shahid Tantray, a photojournalist working for Dainik Bhaskar; Mr. Umer Mehraj, working as a video-journalist for Associated Press Television News (APTN); and Mr. Yawar Kabli and Mr. Showkat Shafi – both freelance photojournalists were allegedly thrashed by police and CRPF personnel while they were covering clashes between stone-pelting protesters and law enforcing agencies in Saraf Kadal locality of the city on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

The two photojournalists Mr. Yawar Kabli and Mr. Showkat Shafi and Mr. Umer Mehraj (video journalist) were rushed to the SKIMS Hospital in Soura after suffering bouts of vomiting. Meanwhile, Shahid Tantray has been detained at the Nowhatta police station. Though Nowhatta police station SHO Iqbal Shah confirmed Mr. Tantray detention, he denied any assault on journalists.

One of the injured journalists in his telephone conversation to the media said that they were “ruthlessly” beaten by CRPF personnel and the police while they were parking a motorcycle. The injured journalist said the video camera belonging to APTN's Mehraj was smashed by the police personnel.

Their professional cameras have also been broken by the troopers as they tried to save themselves from the batons.

Superintendent of Police (North City) Showket Shah said he has no knowledge of the incident. The police are categorically refusing having any knowledge of snatched cameras. Without any rhyme or reason policemen along with Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) thrashed the journalists and

snatched their costly cameras. They did not even hesitate to bundle them into the police vehicles while taking them to the police station Khanyar.

**Background incident:**

Over 50 people, including 21 minors, have been arrested by police since 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 (Friday) for taking part in protests called by the hardline Hurriyat Conference, a senior police officer, warning the crackdown against stone-throwers would continue.

Among those detained were three children aged between nine and 12 years who were released hours later after they were picked up by police.

Protests had erupted in parts of the old city of Sri Nagar on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 afternoon and continued till late evening after the hardline Hurriyat Conference, led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, called for a shutdown against the continued detention of "political prisoners and minors".

Thirty-eight youths are presently being held at various laces.

There are 21 juveniles in the age group of 16 to 18 years who have been sent to the juvenile home and 17 majors who are with us.

Three journalists were hospitalised when police and CRPF personnel allegedly thrashed them and another was detained on Friday when they were covering protests in the old city.

All freedoms enshrined by the constitution of India are being either violated or thrown away by the Jammu and Kashmir police. This attack and other recent assaults against media show that the freedom of expression in the state has been curtailed.

The attack on photojournalists was "outrageous" and we demand a thorough investigation into the incident and punishment to those who were guilty.

## **Appeal**

We, therefore, urge you to immediately take necessary steps to

1. Take immediate measures to provide physical and psychological integrity of the photojournalists who were allegedly thrashed and assaulted by the Government forces;
2. Order a thorough and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned events, in order to identify all those responsible, with a view to publishing the findings and bringing those responsible to justice;
3. Ensure to take immediate action against the accused policemen and CRPF personnel who were responsible for this act;
4. Ensure that adequate reparation, including rehabilitation and compensation should be provided to the victims;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all journalists in India are able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

***Henri Tiphagne***

Hon. National Working Secretary,  
Human Rights Defenders Alert - India