



# HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' ALERT - INDIA

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT

No.32, Besant Road, Chokkikulam, Madurai - 625 002, Tamil Nadu, India.  
P: +91-452-2531874 & 2539520 Fax: +91-452- 2531874 Mobile: 99943-68540  
E.mail: hrda.india@gmail.com Web: www.hrdaindia.org

**Ref No: HRDA/North/DL&JK/07/09/2019**

**September 18, 2019**

**To**

**Mr. Khaleel Ahmad**

National Focal Point - Human Rights Defenders & Deputy Registrar  
National Human Rights Commission  
Manav Adhikar Bhawan,  
Block-C, GPO Complex, INA,  
New Delhi – 110 023  
Email: [hrd-nhrc@nic.in](mailto:hrd-nhrc@nic.in)

**Dear Sir,**

***Sub: HRD Alert - India - Urgent Appeal for Action – New Delhi – Kashmiri Journalist and author Mr. Gowhar Geelani stopped by immigration officials at the Indira Gandhi International Airport from flying abroad– Regarding***

## **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 writing to express our grave concern regarding Kashmiri Journalist-author Mr. Gowhar Geelani who was stopped by immigration officials at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi on 31 August 2019.

### **About the Human Rights Defender:**

Journalist – author and human rights defender Mr.Gowhar Geelani is a broadcast journalist, political analyst and commentator currently based in Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir. He started his professional career in journalism in November 2003 while working for Eenadu Television (ETV) as a sub-editor and reporter, at Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad for a year. He is also a South Asia Journalism Programme Chevening Fellow (2015), Munich Young Leader (2014), and regularly appears as a Kashmir expert and political commentator on television channels including the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World, NDTV 24x7, CNN News 18, India Today, and India Ahead News, among others. For several years he served Deutsche Welle

(Voice of Germany) as editor in Bonn, Germany. His recent book “Kashmir: Rage and Reason is a fresh narrative on Kashmir offering insights about a number of themes about Kashmiri nationalism; resistance of the new age and rebellion after the demise of militant commander Burhan Muzaffar Wani in July, 2016.

**Source of Information on the Incident:**

- The Coordinator of HRDA for the North of India
- Media Reports

**The Perpetrators:**

Immigration authorities at Indira Gandhi International Airport New Delhi

**Date and Place of incident:**

31 August, 2019

Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi

**Details of the Incident:**

According to sources, on the intervening night of 31 August and 1 September 2019 Mr. Gowhar Geelani was stopped from flying to Germany by immigration authorities at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi. Mr Geelani was to fly to Bonn, Germany, in Lufthansa Airlines (LH 763) plane via Munich to participate in an eight-day advanced journalist training programme as Editor of Deutsche Welle, Germany’s international public broadcaster beginning September 1. Mr. Geelani collected his boarding pass at around 9 pm. After that he went to the immigration desk where the official scanned his document and asked him to wait and then the official took his passport and boarding pass with him. He had to wait for more than an hour before being denied permission to travel abroad. He showed the immigration department authorities his itinerary and documentation of the training programme he was supposed to attend. When Geelani protested, the immigration official allegedly told him that he could not fly abroad as the Jammu and Kashmir state government has flagged the issue. The journalist also asked the officials to give him a reason in writing as he would have to show it to his organisation. The officials could not give him a reason or write it down. The officer told him that he has every right to fight, but cannot share any written order or explanation with him. Geelani also tried to explain that he was not a politician but a published author who has been travelling for over a decade and frequently appears on television.

Kashmiri Journalist-author Mr. Gowhar Geelani is not the only case of authorities barring prominent Kashmiris from flying abroad. Last month on August 14, 2019, Kashmiri bureaucrat-turned-politician Mr. Shah Faesal was detained at New Delhi's international airport and sent back to Kashmir. Faesal has sharply criticized New Delhi's abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 and commented that the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi had "murdered" democracy.

Interception of Mr. Gowhar Geelani at New Delhi Airport, detaining him for more than four hours and barring him to fly to Germany amounts to curtailment of Right to Liberty along with Freedom of Movement as guaranteed by the International Human Rights Law, International legal standards and the Indian Constitution.

### **Appeal**

We, therefore urge you to immediately take necessary steps to ensure that this Hon'ble Commission to urgently:

- Order an immediate, thorough, transparent, effective and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned incident of violation of the right to liberty of movement and freedom of expression of journalist and human rights defender Mr. Gowhar Geelani by the immigration officials at the IGI Airport, New Delhi;
- Take immediate and appropriate action against those who are responsible for the violation of the right to liberty of movement of journalist and human rights defender Mr. Gowhar Geelani and using all provisions of law to ensure that the defender is not subjected to any kind of harassment or ill-treatment in future and provide a re-assurance of not engaging in such acts against HRDs;
- Ensure provision of reparation, compensation, apology to the defender for the psychological sufferings he is undergoing because of the harassment and denial of his right to liberty of movement and give this assurance to the NHRC of India in writing immediately and urgently;
- Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Gowhar Geelani who is still under risk of further reprisals from the

perpetrators and provide a re-assurance of not engaging in such acts against HRDs;

- Puts an end to all acts of attack and harassment of all journalists and human rights defenders like Mr. Gowhar Geelani in the country to ensure that in all circumstances they carry out their legitimate human rights activities as journalists, writers and human rights defenders without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions;

Looking forward to your immediate action in this regard,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Henri Tiphagne', with a horizontal line underneath it.

**(Henri Tiphagne)**

Honorary National Working Secretary