

Amnesty

UK South Asia

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South Asia Coordinator Team

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Thank you for your support.

Jerry, Cherry, Nigina & Ayesha

Meta's Human Rights Report ignores the real threat posed to human rights worldwide

Last week, Meta released its first annual Human Rights Report, covering all the company's platforms and products including Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Meta says the report is inspired by the requirement under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights that companies "know and show" that they respect human rights.

Amnesty International is questioning this, saying that the report appears to be a cursory and selective analysis of the company's human rights impacts, conspicuously failing to disclose any information on the most pressing threats posed to human rights worldwide. It makes no mention of the root cause of Meta's systemic threat to human rights – the surveillance advertising business model, which drives the collection of ever more (and ever more personal) data on users, to then sell targeted ads. As highlighted in the Amnesty's 2019 Surveillance Giants report, Meta's business model represents a serious threat to human rights including the rights to privacy, freedom of expression and non-discrimination. This is a glaring omission in Meta's assessment – indeed, the business model is the core problem regarding the company's adverse impacts on human rights across the globe.

Relating this to South Asia, Meta's report also published only a summary of the long-awaited independent Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) on **India** – an unacceptable decision, given that civil society groups, including Amnesty, have repeatedly called for the publication of the full report. This demonstrates a complete lack of transparency regarding the human rights risks identified, and how Meta mitigates these in the Indian context. Researchers have already pointed out the role that the Facebook platform played in spreading hate in India – what we need to know is how Meta will ensure that this does not happen again.

Read more: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2022/07/metas-human-rights-report-ignores-the-real-threat-the-company-poses-to-human-rights-worldwide/>

SRI LANKA

Shameful, brutal assault on peaceful protestors must immediately stop

The new Sri Lankan President must immediately stop the shameful, brutal assault on peaceful protestors, Amnesty International said today after the military carried out a pre-dawn attack on the peaceful protest site

On Friday 22nd July, at around 01:00 local time, the military and police armed with riot gear violently descended on the protest camps, indiscriminately beating and assaulting everyone and everything in their way, dismantling the tents in which protestors had been sleeping for over three months.

All access points to the protest site were blocked ahead of the raid. Eyewitness accounts and media reports say that the military attacked many protestors, especially those trying to film the developments. Soldiers broke apart 'one tent after the other' in the stretch leading to Presidential Secretariat and dismantled the protest site.

An eyewitness interviewed by Amnesty International said, "There were about 200-300 demonstrators at that time, I would say. Suddenly (the forces) came out from (behind) the barricades and totally destroyed and broke down the tents. There were enough police and military to swamp the area. The police and especially the army beat up peaceful protestors."

"Amnesty International strongly condemns the pre-dawn attack by security forces on peaceful protestors at Galle Face. It is shameful that the new government resorted to such violent tactics within hours of coming to power." Kyle Ward, Amnesty International's Deputy Secretary General.



Please see the full Amnesty Report:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/sri-lanka-shameful-brutal-assault-on-peaceful-protestors-must-immediately-stop/?fbclid=IwAR2gfVRwAuky9XQ2pFC9aE51LPC9mR6jNHKEloy8y4irHM-7M08RutoN2MQ>

Authorities must refrain from using military to police protests



"The recent escalation of the authorities' response to protests by calling in the armed forces, firing at protestors and excessive use of tear gas which resulted in the death of one person yesterday is deeply worrying," said Yamini Mishra, Amnesty International's South Asia Regional Director.

Amnesty calls upon law enforcement agencies to act with restraint to avoid further serious injury and loss of life. They may only use the minimum level of force necessary force to bring a situation under control where it is strictly necessary and proportionate.

See the Amnesty report:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/sri-lanka-authorities-must-refrain-from-use-of-military-to-police-protests/>

Disappearances in Sri Lanka: A Continuing Crime

According to the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), Sri Lanka is second in the world for reported disappearances. Between 60,000 and 100,000 people are estimated to have been disappeared since the 1980s.

The 'Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice' has produced a new report on disappearances and impunity in Sri Lanka:

"The Government of Sri Lanka has an obligation, both according to international treaties and the Sri Lankan Constitution, to respect, promote, and protect human rights in the country. Unfortunately, successive governments have fallen far short of meeting that obligation. In Sri Lanka, a climate of impunity for perpetrators has meant that human rights are not properly protected, and that there has not been accountability for past or ongoing violations.

This culture of impunity and lack of accountability has been particularly disastrous for the family members of the forcibly disappeared. Successive governments have continually spoken of its commitment to justice of these disappearances and has created bodies like the Office of Missing Persons to deal with cases, but when no progress has been made, all these promises seem like empty words to the mothers and fathers who still do not know what has happened to their children."

Please see the full report:

<https://www.srilankacampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Report-Disappearances-in-Sri-Lanka-A-Continuing-Crime-1.pdf>

INDIA

The right to a livelihood: Young Indian job-seekers fume at shortened military contracts

PR Narendra Modi stormed to election victory in 2014 and again in 2019, promising to create millions more jobs to address the high unemployment rates, particularly among youth. However, unemployment amongst those aged 15-29 years is currently officially 12.9%, although the reality is likely to be higher. The latest move by the government to cut the period of contracts offered to those joining the military, from 17 years to four, has created major protests across the country, with young people saying they no longer want to join. The move is said by the government to be a reform measure, but is widely seen as simply for cost-cutting reasons. Young hopefuls question the promises of good jobs available after they serve their four years.



Young job-seekers prepare for exams and interviews

<https://www.reuters.com/world/india/young-indian-job-seekers-fume-over-shortened-military-contracts-2022-07-06/>

Joint statement on the first anniversary of the death of Father Stan Swamy

On 5 July 2021, 84-year-old Jesuit priest and human rights defender Father Stan Swamy died in judicial custody at the Holy Family Hospital, in Mumbai, India. On the first anniversary of his death, 13 international and national human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, recalled their demand for an independent and effective investigation into his death in custody and for the immediate and unconditional release of the 15 other

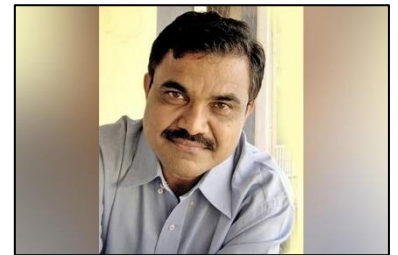
prominent human rights defenders charged in the same case, known as the BK16. There is still no sign of justice for these human rights defenders, who are held under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act without formal charges or trial.



<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa20/5803/2022/en/>

Anand Teltumbde: Decoding strategies of resistance

For Anand Teltumbde, one of the BK16 HRDs imprisoned under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 15th July was the third birthday he has spent in prison. To mark that day, the National Campaign to Defend Democracy organised an event to discuss his contributions as an activist, scholar and intellectual. Much of his work was concerned with the lack of human rights for Dalit people and the root causes of their deprivation. Meanwhile he has continued to campaign for his own rights in prison and those of others. For example, recently he had to fight for the right to a 5-minute phone call to his grieving 90-year-old mother after his brother was killed in an encounter with police.



Opposition leaders protest

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was detained by the Delhi Police during protests against the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) summoning of Sonia Gandhi in an alleged money laundering case. Other party leaders have also been detained. Criticising the central government for "dictatorship", Rahul alleged that they were not being allowed



to hold discussions inside Parliament and the leaders of peaceful protests were arrested, in contravention of the right to freedom of speech. "India is a police state, Modi is a king," he added. Sonia Gandhi was questioned for 2½ hours at the ED office for a second time in the National Herald money laundering case. This is a result of an investigation of alleged misappropriation of funds when the Gandhis acquired the newspaper in 2013.

Meanwhile in the ongoing court case against former Amnesty International India office, the government alleges that money was channelled by AIUK to Amnesty India for "anti-national" work, in violation of legal guidelines. They particularly cite Amnesty India's work on Kashmir.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/sonia-gandhi-ed-summons-congress-protest-live-updates-8051505/>

<https://colorsofindia.media/world/india/ed-amnesty-uk-routed-rs-51-crore-to-india-arm-for-anti-national-work/>

Kashmir

Resistance music growing in popularity in Kashmir

Sarfraz Javaid is part of a movement of artists in Kashmir who are forming a new musical tradition that blends progressive Sufi rock with hip-hop in an assertive expression of political aspirations. They call it "conscious music." Drawing on elements of Islam and spiritual poetry, it is laced with religious metaphors to circumvent measures

restricting free speech in the region. It also seeks to bridge tensions between Muslim tradition and modernism in a region that in many ways still clings to a conservative past.



<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/kashmir-ap-india-sufism-srinagar-b2115785.html>

Yasin Malik: Protests in Kashmir after India hands separatist leader two life sentences

Violent protests erupted in parts of Kashmir after a court in India handed prominent separatist leader Yasin Malik two life sentences for “waging war against the government of India” and funding terror activities. As leader of the



banned pro- independence group, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Malik was also given five 10-year jail terms and three five-year jail terms on separate charges, all under India’s criminal code. Some of the charges for which he was convicted included criminal conspiracy and conspiracy for terrorism. On a small positive note, a plea for the death penalty by the prosecutor [on behalf of India’s federal National Investigation Agency (NIA)] was rejected by the court, which said the case did not fall into the “rarest of rare” category needed for such a sentence.

Protesters in Kashmir marched around chanting slogans calling for freedom before clashing with police. People shuttered their shops and several observed spontaneous shutdowns as a massive police and paramilitary deployment was carried out in parts of Kashmir ahead of the verdict. Security forces fired tear gas to disperse masked protesters, some of whom threw stones at them, and deployed surveillance drones in the area. Mobile internet services were also suspended in anticipation of protests.

Note from Cherry: JKLF is associated with violence and I include this article not as a judgement for or against the prison sentence, but because I think it is interesting that the Indian government requested the death penalty, but the court rejected this.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/asia/india/yasin-malik-kashmiri-separatist-life-imprisonment-b2087652.html>

PAKISTAN

Extreme weather: Searing heatwaves and torrential rains in Pakistan impact human rights

Pakistan is one of the most affected countries in the world by the climate crisis. Marginalised groups, such as disabled people, women, children, farmers, people living in poverty in urban areas, and migrants, are most at risk from the consequences of severe weather.

The months since March 2022 have been particularly relentless in terms of extreme weather events. Heat waves have seen some of the highest recorded temperatures in the last 60 years. Scorching heat has a devastating impact on agriculture dependent communities and triggers concerns for food security. Drought conditions experienced in parts of Pakistan such as Balochistan during April and May and related health concerns were made worse by a deadly cholera outbreak coinciding with water scarcity. There has been little respite with the onset of the monsoon in recent weeks as above average rainfall has created the conditions for flash floods.



Attempts to find relief amid such conditions, where financially accessible, can exacerbate them. For instance, the increased demand for electricity to cool homes leads to load shedding and power cuts, as well as excessive demands for coal.

The state must provide relief to its citizens. According to the UN World Food Program, Pakistan's Disaster Risk Management policies are ambitious, but suffer from a lack of implementation. The gaps are attributed to insufficient coordination, a dearth of funds, resources and expertise. This points to the fact that the international community, particularly those nations whose wealth has been built on fossil fuels and unsustainable practices, has an immense responsibility to act to reduce the burden on developing countries by reducing emissions, sharing knowledge, and providing funding.

Read the full statement:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/5828/2022/en/>

AFGHANISTAN

Taliban's 'Suffocating Crackdown' Destroying Lives of Afghan Women



The Taliban captured almost all of the country, including the capital, Kabul, in August 2021, when the Western-backed government collapsed and all international forces, led by the United States, withdrew after nearly 20 years of war with the Islamist group. It has been over 345 days since the Taliban took power. For most Afghan women and girls, almost each one of these days since 15 August has brought a deterioration in their rights, their condition, and their social and political status.

The Taliban promised they would uphold rights of all Afghans. But the Islamist rulers have since banned girls from attending school starting with seventh grade, required women to use face coverings in public and told women employed in the public sector to stay at home, with the exception of those who work for the ministries of education, health and a few others.

The Taliban have decimated protections for those facing domestic violence, detained women and girls for minor violations and contributed to a surge in child marriages. The report also documented the torture and abuse of women arrested by the Taliban for protesting against restrictions. A new Amnesty report lays out the Taliban playbook for erasing half the population: electrocutions, beatings, detentions, and disappearances.

See Amnesty International report 'Death In Slow Motion':

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/death-slow-motion-women-and-girls-under-taliban-report-2022>



In Afghanistan, women take their lives out of desperation, Human Rights Council hears

Echoing widespread international concern for ordinary Afghans, UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet condemned the massive unemployment of women, the restrictions placed on the way they dress, and their access on basic services.

Women-owned and operated businesses have been shut down, Ms. Bachelet added, saying that 1.2 million girls no longer have access to secondary education, in line with a decision by the de facto authorities.

The situation for women is so desperate in Afghanistan that they are committing suicide at a rate of one or two every day, the Human Rights Council has heard. It comes as the top UN rights forum in Geneva agreed to Member States' request for a rare Urgent Debate on the issue in the beginning of the month.

Addressing the Council, Fawzia Koofi, former deputy speaker of the Afghan Parliament, said lack of opportunity and ailing mental health, was taking a terrible toll: "Every day there is at least one or two women who commit suicide for the lack of opportunity, for the mental health, for the pressure they receive". "The fact that girls as young as nine years old are being sold, not only because of economic pressure, but because of the fact that there is no hope for them, for their family, it is not normal."

<https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/news/2022/07/afghanistan-women-take-their-lives-out-desperation-human-rights-council>

NEPAL

New draft of Transitional Justice Bill falls short of promised reforms to protect victims' rights

The Nepali government's bill to amend its current transitional justice law (aimed at ensuring justice for victims of the 10-year armed conflict 1996-2006) marks some progress toward accountability but will not fully provide justice to victims or meet Nepal's obligations under international law in its current form, said Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Commission of Jurists, and TRIAL International. They said that Nepal's government and parliament should amend the bill to align with international legal standards. "Victims and their families who have waited anxiously for amendments to the law, hoping that their demands for truth and justice will be met, are disappointed," said Mandira Sharma, senior international legal adviser at ICJ. "Despite the promise of reform, this bill, if implemented as it stands today, would shield many perpetrators from being brought to justice."

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa31/5888/2022/en/>

Bangladesh

Don't Forget the Rohingya Refugees

Sign this petition now urging Bangladesh and the international community to ensure participation of Rohingya refugees in the decisions that affect them.

Please sign the petition:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/protect-the-rights-of-the-rohingya-refugees/?fbclid=IwAR1ro6JEEM1RfiU26uMcPBv88GVRHG8qRRW7xj72D9pFDA36AvpnkM2YAPk>

Petitions are currently addressed to the governments of Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Indonesia and the United States. Not the UK Government.



'Communal violence not acceptable under any circumstances'

On Friday 15th July, a mob vandalized a temple, grocery stores and several homes of the Hindu community in Narail.

From the *Dhaka Daily Star*:



Deepali Rani Saha watched her house burn down. "After one group looted all our valuables, another group came and found our door open. As there was nothing left to loot, they set our home on fire." "They then attacked the temple next door and vandalised the idol." Deepali's was among the three homes and dozens of shops that were vandalised or burnt down.

The attacks were carried out by mobs protesting a Facebook post by 18-year-old Akash Saha. The police detained Akash's father and prepared to file a case under the Digital Security Act against Akash. None of the attackers, however, have been arrested.

"Communal violence in a secular country such as Bangladesh is not acceptable under any circumstances", says the National Human Rights Commission.

Some cultural organizations have announced a three-day nationwide programme from July 29 to 31 against the ongoing communal violence. Letters will be handed to the home minister and district commissioners in each district on July 31.

Threats and harassment faced by Rohingya human rights defenders Saiful Arakani and Aziz Arakani

Saiful and Aziz are brothers and Rohingya journalists who report on the various human rights violations faced by Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and elsewhere in Asia. Saiful Arakani works as a reporter and Aziz Arakani as a camera. The human rights defenders report on issues such as human trafficking of Rohingya refugees, killings of

Rohingya human rights defenders and leaders, sale of drugs, lack of food security schemes, fires in refugee camps and so on. For their reporting on the issues faced by Rohingyas, Saiful and Aziz have faced repeated threats, harassment and violence from the police in Bangladesh and local mobs. On 15 July 2022, the Bangladeshi Armed Police Battalion conducted a raid at the house in Nayapara Registered Camp.

'Front Line Defenders' have produced a report on Saiful and Aziz:

<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sw/node/7437?fbclid=IwAR2fvtclig39j7SB3IEAj3j1JlhH50f74ypMEQzDjBmvVDArjnWOAYZCY6U>

