

Amnesty UK South Asia

January 2026



South Asia Coordinator Team

You have been sent this Newsletter because you or your local group opted in to receive Actions, Campaigns and Updates on South Asia. You can opt out at any time by contacting one of us.

Please let us know if you have taken any actions or need further information.

Thank you for your support.

Cherry, Jerry, Irfan, Faissal & Will

GARMENT WORKERS IN BANGLADESH, INDIA, PAKISTAN AND SRI LANKA

The garment workers campaign has been launched after two years of Amnesty research work. Our Activist Led Campaign will focus on violations of workers' right to freedom of association in the four target countries: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and the steps that brands must take.

Two reports are now available. Please see the [Blog](#):

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/country-specialists/garment-workers-bangladesh-india-pakistan-and-sri-lanka>

1. Stitched Up: Denial of Freedom of Association for Garment Workers.



Please see [‘Stitched Up’](#).

2. Abandoned by Fashion: The Urgent Need for Fashion Brands to Champion Workers' Rights.



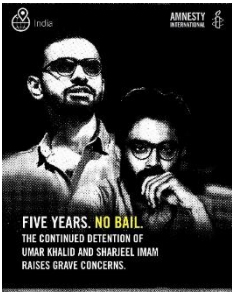
Please see [‘Abandoned by Fashion’](#).

Join the fight for garment workers' rights

This Activist Led Campaign needs support from UK activists. The UK is the home of more of the brands than other sections. Please contact Jerry Allen (jerry.allen@amnesty.org.uk) for more details.

INDIA

Umar Khalid denied bail



The Supreme Court has again denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, students who have been jailed since 2020 under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for protesting against the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The CAA links citizenship to religion by excluding Muslims from a path to Indian citizenship available to non-Muslim refugees. The judgement also imposed exceptionally restrictive conditions on any future bail applications, effectively placing their right to seek bail at the mercy of the prosecution's pace and conduct and undermining the principle of regular judicial review. This highlights a worrying trend of prolonged pre-trial detention becoming normalised.

Responding to the judgment, Aakar Patel, Chair of the Board of Amnesty International India, said that imposing a blanket one-year ban on bail without clear justification is deeply troubling especially after more than five years of detention without trial, simply for exercising their right to peaceful protest. He said "... it is shameful that Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam continue to be denied bail. Neither of these individuals should be in detention in the first place. They have been detained for more than five years without trial on politically motivated allegations – the charges against them should be dropped and their release should be unconditional."

Read the Amnesty statement [here](#). Also read and share the post on Facebook [here](#).

Take action: Write a solidarity letter or card to Umar Khalid, ID Number 626714 Jail No. 2, Tihar Central Jail, New Delhi 110058, India

Evidence of mis-use of anti-terrorism laws

Recent data revealed by the Ministry of Home Affairs in the Indian Parliament shows that the conviction rate of those arrested under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), India's primary counter terrorism law, is a mere 3.2%, indicating there was no clear evidence to support most of these arrests. Those arrested under this law include Umar Khalid, Khurram Parvez and the activists in the Bhima Koregaon (BK16) case. The process is the punishment here.

Read Amnesty's post on X [here](#).

Chief Minister's removal of woman's hijab demands "unequivocal condemnation"

Bihar's Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar, was recently seen repeatedly pulling Nusrat Parveen's hijab during a government function distributing appointment letters to Ayush practitioners.

The Deputy Chief Minister tried to stop him, but other men are seen laughing at the spectacle, as shown [here](#).



A video of the incident was circulated widely, following which Aakar Patel, Chair of Board at Amnesty International India, said "This act was an assault on this woman's dignity, autonomy, and identity. When a public official forcibly pulls down a woman's hijab, it sends a message to the general public that this behaviour is acceptable. No one has the right to police a woman's faith or clothing. Such actions deepen fear, normalise discrimination, and erode the very foundations of equality and freedom of religion. This violation demands unequivocal condemnation and accountability. Urgent steps must be taken to ensure that no woman is subjected to such degrading treatment."

Wearing, and not wearing, specific forms of dress and religious and cultural symbols is a component of the right to freedom of expression and to freedom of religion or belief, which individuals should be free to decide on. This incident is of particular concern in a context where Muslims are increasingly targeted and threatened. Nusrat Parveen has reportedly fled the state and refused to accept her appointment.

Read Amnesty's statement [here](#).

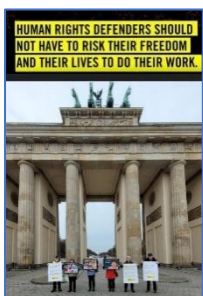
Violence against Christians also increasing

A local NGO, Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) reports that across India, violence against Christian communities has intensified. They say these are not a series of isolated incidents, but represent a deepening pattern of intimidation, exclusion, and impunity—often unfolding at moments of profound vulnerability, including during prayer, livelihood activities, and even burial rites. Between 2014 and 2024, documented incidents of violence against Christians rose from 139 to 834, an increase of over 500%. In 2025 alone (January–November), more than 700 incidents had already been recorded, affecting families, churches, schools, hospitals, and service institutions. Dalit Christians, Adivasi Christians, and women are among the most affected. Nearly half of all incidents are concentrated in just two states: Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Over the recent Christmas period there have been further reports of violence against Christians during festive events.

CJP has approached the National Commission for Minorities with detailed complaints about this evolving situation, urging the NCM to require state authorities to ensure impartial enforcement of criminal law and protection of the right to peaceful religious practice across India.

You can read more about the work of CJP [here](#).

BK16 campaign



On 10 December, Human Rights Day, groups and individuals in Europe and the US demonstrated in support of the release of the remaining BK16 prisoners. Currently Surendra Gadling, Ramesh Gaichor and Sagar Gorkhe are still in jail, with the rest on bail, but under restrictive conditions. The charges remain against all of them.

Gautam Navlakh has been allowed to move to his home in Delhi provided he reports every week to the local police station and does not leave Delhi. This is good news, as previously he was forced to remain in Mumbai, which is not his home, so he had to rent accommodation.

The Bombay High Court has allowed the former principal of St. Xavier's College to file a fresh petition challenging the Magistrate Enquiry Report on the death of Father Stan Swamy in custody in 2021. The Magistrate Enquiry report published two months ago stated that Father Stan died of "natural causes", but evidence indicates he died because he did not receive timely care.

Take action: Please continue to write to the three remaining prisoners in Taloja Central Prison, Kharjar, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra 410210.

Global call to end state militarisation and extrajudicial killings in resource-rich Adivasi regions

On 18 November 2025, the Indian State announced the killing of Madvi Hidma, Indigenous Adivasi activist and Naxalite leader, along with his comrade and life partner, Madakam Raje, and eleven other people. With this military “victory,” the BJP Government reiterated it was successfully moving towards the Home Minister Amit Shah’s deadline of 31 March 2026 to end the Naxalite movement in India. This declaration is part of the BJP government’s repressive policies targeting Adivasis, Dalits, Muslims, Christians and other marginalised communities. While the government presents it as a security measure against Naxalite terrorists, it is thought that the underlying motive is to promote expropriation of land and natural resources by corporations close to the government. This is particularly prevalent in parts of the state of Chhattisgarh, where Adivasis live in fear as incidence of violence and extrajudicial killings increase. Chhattisgarh is one of the poorest states in India with a high proportion of Adivasi communities, but it is also rich in mineral resources.

Read the statement signed by almost 60 international agencies [here](#).

KASHMIR

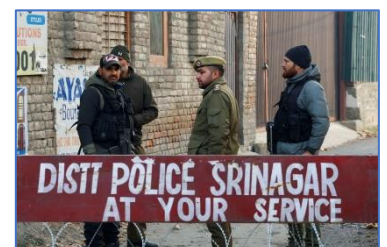
Webinar

Please sign up for our webinar on **5 March**, featuring two speakers from Indian Administered Kashmir, who will talk about the current and possible future legal situation for the region and look at the impact of recent developments on the lives and livelihoods of rural people. We also hope to have a speaker from Azad Kashmir, on the Pakistan administered side. See the poster attached with this newsletter for the Zoom link. Or click directly on this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/1-HtoS-GSY-RNu12gep9fQ>

India’s VPN ban in Kashmir ‘adds to psychological pressure’, say residents

The Indian Government has ordered a sweeping ban on Virtual Private Networks (VPN) for two months, citing ‘threats to national security’. This has significant impacts for people working in IT, threatening their ability to carry out their work safely and effectively. For example, Basit Banday (name changed) is employed by an IT firm based in the Indian city of Pune, handling the sensitive healthcare data of his company’s clients, ensuring they are safe from leaks and cyberattacks. He works from his home in Kashmir using a VPN, which allows a user to mask their internet protocol address by routing web traffic through a remote server, making it undetectable to telephone data or internet service providers. The new ban makes this impossible, meaning that Basit may either lose his job or be forced to re-locate to Pune.

In a security crackdown following the order issued on 29 December, multiple videos shared on social media showed policemen in riot gear gesturing to pedestrians or those driving vehicles to stop, and asking for their mobile devices. If the devices were locked, people were instructed to unlock them as officers shuffled through them.



Internet restrictions in Indian-administered Kashmir are [not new](#). Of the 901 [internet shutdowns](#) the Indian government has periodically imposed across the country, Kashmir accounts for nearly 50% of them, according to a monitor which started recording the blackouts in 2012.

Read the article in Al Jazeera [here](#).

Public unrest resurges in Azad Kashmir after agreement stalls

Public unrest in Azad Jammu Kashmir is once again taking a serious turn. The agreement reached on October 4, 2025, between the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), federal ministers, and the Azad Kashmir government has now become mired in severe controversy. Despite the expiration of the stipulated 90-day implementation period on January 3, 2026, the lack of tangible progress has sparked intense disappointment and anxiety among the public.

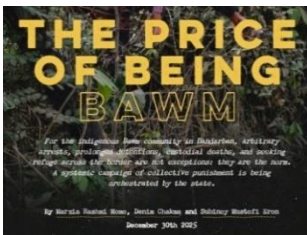
Read the news report [here](#).

BANGLADESH

Bawm Prisoners IAR Case: URGENT ACTION

The Bawm Prisoner IAR Case needs your support. Please see the official Urgent Action [here](#).

59 Indigenous Bawm people continue to be detained without trial in Chittagong Hill Tracts in south-eastern Bangladesh. They are accused by the Bangladeshi authorities of being “terrorists”. Of the 142 people arrested in April 2024, three have died in custody amidst concerns of lack of adequate healthcare, while those still in detention remain at serious risk. The 59, including three children, continue to be jailed without trial. Bangladeshi authorities must either promptly charge individuals with an internationally recognisable criminal offence or release them.



The price of being Bawm

“It has been 614 days since I last saw my daughter outside prison walls,” Zing Nun Mawi Bawm said, her eyes welling with tears. “The prison ruined her future.”

[Please see this report from Netra news on the impact on the Bawm nation.](#)

Further attacks on minorities

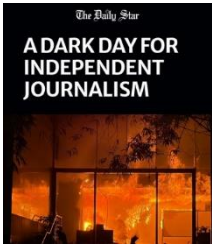
Dipu Chandra Das was lynched on false charges of blasphemy and then set on fire. The mob who beat Dipu to death decided that it was not enough to take his life. They then dragged his body, tied it to a tree and set it ablaze. His garment factory, Pioneer Knitwear, had forced him to resign and then handed him over to the angry mob to protect the factory. He was the sole breadwinner of his family and a father to a three-year-old daughter. An investigation found no evidence Dipu had said anything that he was accused of.



The factory floor manager said: “A group of people gathered outside the factory. To manage the situation, he was released from employment. There was a highly volatile situation both inside and outside the factory. The enraged people took Dipu away and carried out the incident.”

Taqbir Huda: “The language of outrage is always moral, but the outcomes are always extremely material: intimidation, looting, extortion, land grabbing and settling personal vendettas under the cover of “defending faith.” But Dipu’s murder reaches a new level of barbarity.” “What happened to Dipu Chandra Das is a national indictment: of an employer that treated a worker’s life as a disposable offering, of a mob that turned murder into a public rite, and of a state that failed the Hindu community each time it was targeted.”

Newspaper offices vandalised and burnt



Angry protesters set The Daily Star office on fire in the early hours of 19 December, following the vandalism and torching of a Prothom Alo building. At the time the buildings were set on fire, many journalists were trapped inside. They were accused of supporting the Awami League. But these journalists had previously risked their lives and liberties to document the horrors perpetrated by the Awami League regime when it was in power, including corruption, disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and torture. Now people who call themselves anti Awami League burned the same newsroom for allegedly being too pro Awami League.

Journalist targeted with anti-terror legislation must be released

Journalist Anis Alamgir was detained on 15 December under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) after a complaint was filed against him and four others for allegedly spreading propaganda in favour of the Awami League. In response, Amnesty International's Rehab Mahamoor, said:

"Anis Alamgir's arrest continues an alarming trend of individuals being targeted for being perceived to support activities of the now banned Awami League. Rather than misusing anti-terror legislation to silence people expressing their views and opinions, the interim government and authorities should instead be facilitating freedom of expression and association, including in the lead up to elections. The interim government must respect its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and immediately release Anis Alamgir."

Read the Amnesty statement [here](#).



AFGHANISTAN

Amnesty protests unlawful detention, harassment and deportation of Afghan refugees



In an open letter to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, Amnesty International called on the Pakistani authorities to halt the deportation of Afghan refugees and ensure that individuals with international protection needs are safeguarded in line with international human rights law. The letter noted that Amnesty International has documented a complete lack of transparency, due process and accountability in the unlawful arrests, detentions and deportations of Afghan nationals in Pakistan, calling on the country to create well-resourced and

accessible pathways for the registration of refugees. Proactive measures are needed to expedite the registration of refugees particularly at risk, including but not limited to women and girls, journalists, and those belonging to minority and ethnic communities.

The last year has marked a worrying escalation in the number of arrests and detention of refugees, with the Pakistani authorities commencing both phase two and three of the Repatriation Plan, impacting Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) and Proof of Registration (PoR) card holders. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), arrests and detentions have increased tenfold as there have been more than 115,000 such cases since the start of the year.

Across Pakistan, Amnesty International has observed the process of detention to be arbitrary and lacking any due process. Those detained are mostly taken to detention centres where they have little access to any legal representation or to their family members. In some cases, refugees have been arrested under the Foreigners Act, 1946 which allows for detention of foreigners deemed to have entered or stayed in the country illegally.

Read the open letter [here](#). Also share the post on X [here](#).

Arrest of female journalist

The Taliban police command in Kunduz confirmed the detention of a female journalist on 6 January but claimed her arrest was unrelated to her professional activities. The woman, named Nazera Rashidi, who previously worked for a local radio station, was detained along with four other women on charges described as “criminal offences” and taken to an undisclosed location. Her family say she has not engaged in any illegal activity, and called for her immediate release. They said she is the sole breadwinner for her family and the guardian of her younger siblings. The case has drawn renewed attention to the situation of journalists in Afghanistan, particularly women. Previously, Muhajir Farahi, the Taliban’s deputy minister for publications at the Ministry of Information and Culture, said there were “no journalists imprisoned in Afghanistan”. Media rights groups dispute that claim. Women journalists face particularly severe restrictions. According to recent surveys, only about 7% of women journalists say they are able to work freely in Afghanistan. Around 55% report facing personal threats, while more than 32% work covertly, mainly for online and written media, due to fears of arrest or reprisals.

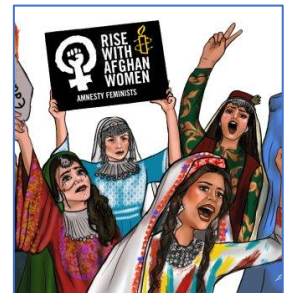
Read more from Afghanistan International (Afintl) [here](#).

Rise with Afghan Women

If you haven’t done so already, please join the Amnesty Feminists’ campaign, Rise with Afghan Women. You can take action via street stalls (think about International Women’s Day in March) or write to or arrange a meeting with your MP to ask them to support Afghan women.

The link to the action pack is [here](#). A revised version of the letter for MPs is also attached with this newsletter, which you can use or adapt.

Webinar: On 29 January the Amnesty South West England Network is hosting a webinar at which Faissal Sharif, AIUK Country Coordinator for Afghanistan, will talk about his experiences growing up as an Afghan refugee in Germany. The Zoom link for registration can be found on the flyer attached with this newsletter



NEPAL

UN expert on minority rights visits Nepal

The Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat, visited Nepal from 4 to 13 December 2025. He examined legislation, policies and practices affecting people belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and assessed effective political participation, adequate education, access to justice and administration of criminal justice, including related to hate crimes and hate speech targeting minorities.

In a statement at the end of his visit he said that minorities and Dalits must be empowered to fulfill their rights and Nepal must close the gap between clear constitutional and legislative provisions and their meaningful implementation to effectively prohibit discrimination against persons belonging to minorities. He noted that access

to education for minorities and Dalits is the gateway to building skills and confidence, and breaking through cycles of poverty that have prevented them from realising the full enjoyment of their rights and their meaningful contribution to society as a whole.

He expressed profound concern about the high rate of impunity for crimes against Dalits, such as violence linked to inter-caste marriages, warning about the curtailment of religious freedom, through selective use of the anti-conversion provision, leading to discrimination against religious minorities, including Muslims and Christians.

A full report will be presented in March 2026.

SRI LANKA

OHCHR report on accountability for conflict-related sexual violence

[The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\) report](#) builds on findings by previous UN investigations and highlights conflict-related sexual violence that occurred well after the end of the internal armed conflict in 2009, citing incidents reported as recently as in 2024. The report must act as a clarion call for Sri Lanka's government to finally deliver justice and accountability for the thousands of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. It reaffirms the widely known truth that sexual violence against members of the Tamil community was 'deliberate, widespread, and systemic.' It rightly recognizes that some of these acts may have amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

OHCHR's findings further lay bare the failure of successive administrations to provide redress and the horrific impact it continues to have on survivors. The new government committed itself to act, and the president himself declared: 'If we fail to deliver justice, who else will?' It's time these words translated into action.

Amnesty urges the authorities to end impunity and publicly commit to a timeline to implement long overdue steps that ensure the swift realization of truth, justice and reparations."

[See the report.](#)

Lasantha Wickrematunge



Seventeen years ago, journalist and editor Lasantha Wickrematunge was brutally assassinated. His killing remains one of Sri Lanka's most emblematic cases of attacks on media freedom and the failure to ensure accountability for human rights violations. Seventeen years on, no one has been held responsible. Repeated investigations have stalled or been undermined, reinforcing a broader pattern of impunity for crimes against journalists and critics. For Lasantha's family, justice remains elusive.

On the anniversary of his death, his daughter, Ahimsa Wickrematunge, has spoken on why accountability is essential not only for her father, but for upholding the rule of law, protecting freedom of expression, and preventing future abuses in Sri Lanka. Amnesty International calls on the government of Sri Lanka to end impunity for Lasantha's killing. Those responsible for his assassination must be held to account immediately!

PAKISTAN

Twenty-seventh Constitutional Amendment attacks independence of judiciary

Amnesty International stated that the Twenty-seventh amendment to the Constitution poses a grave threat to the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law in Pakistan by creating a Federal Constitutional Court that lacks independence, erodes judges' security of tenure and insulates the president and heads of the naval, armed and air forces from accountability. They called for an urgent review of this constitutional amendment to ensure that all provisions fully comply with Pakistan's international human rights law obligations and commitments. They also called for appropriate measures to safeguard the impartiality, independence and safety of judges, ensuring that they can carry out their judicial functions without any inappropriate or unwarranted interference and any restrictions, improper influences, pressures and threats, direct or indirect, from any quarter or for any reason.

The amendment erodes judicial independence – already weakened by last year's twenty-sixth constitutional amendment – by granting the president and prime minister authority to appoint the first chief justice and initial judges of the Federal Constitutional Court, thus increasing executive influence over the judiciary.

Read the full statement [here](#).

Ahmadi editor sentenced to life imprisonment under blasphemy laws

The International Human Rights Desk has published a special report on the conviction of Mubarak Ahmad Sani, an Ahmadi educator sentenced to life imprisonment on 24 December 2025 under Pakistan's blasphemy laws. The report sets out the allegations against him, the procedural history of the case, and explains how the conviction not only legitimises the criminalisation of basic Ahmadi religious practices, but also lowers the threshold for blasphemy cases by removing any requirement to show desecration or intent, and leaves no protected private space for religious worship. These developments carry serious consequences for freedom of religion and fair trial protections in Pakistan.