

## **HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND ACTIVISTS**

### **One killed, 150 injured as protests continue in Jammu & Kashmir following rape and murder of two young women**

**10 June 2009, 00:00 UTC**

Protesters in Jammu & Kashmir continued to press for the Indian government to seriously pursue allegations that members of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) raped and murdered two women. One person has already been killed and around 150 injured in week-long protests provoked by the sexual assault and murder of two young women in Shopian on 30 May. "These protests are about the ongoing failure of the Indian government to bring members of the security forces to justice for serious human rights violations," said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific director. "Until the Indian government provides accountability for the conduct of the armed forces in Kashmir, it will continue to face discontent from the residents." The two women, 22-year-old Aasiya Jan and her sister-in-law, 17-year-old Niloufer Jan, went missing when they went to tend their family fruit orchard on 29 May at Nagbal near Shopian. Their bodies were discovered the following day in two different places at Ranbi Ara, a stream close to a CRPF camp. Family members and local residents have accused the CRPF personnel of involvement in the sexual assault and murders and called for investigations.

Amnesty International has called on the Indian authorities to immediately carry out fair and impartial investigations into the allegations of CRPF involvement in the murders and sexual assault of the two women. Police and paramilitary forces have resorted to firing at protesters in several places, including Shopian, Baramulla and Srinagar. Reports from hospitals that admitted the injured indicate that security forces fired both live ammunition and rubber bullets. "Authorities should ensure that security forces comply with international human rights standards on law enforcement, in particular those relating to the use of force to deal with protestors. Any instance of excessive use of force should be impartially investigated," said Sam Zarifi. Local human rights organizations and journalists have informed Amnesty International that concerted attempts have been made to suppress evidence of sexual assault of the two women. Police also failed to interview potential witnesses, even as the state authorities ordered a judicial inquiry into the murders. Amnesty International has repeatedly called for repeal of the security legislation in force in Jammu & Kashmir that facilitates impunity by providing discretionary powers to security forces and effectively enabling them to violate human rights. Serious concerns also remain over the effectiveness of past inquiries ordered by the authorities into human rights violations including unlawful killings, enforced disappearances and sexual assault of women. Amnesty International has also received information on 8 June that at least four leaders of Kashmiri separatist organizations have been arbitrarily detained. No charge has been levelled against them so far.

One of the detained leaders, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, was taken to an unknown destination. Yasin Malik, Javed Mir and Mirwaiz Mohammad Umar Farooq were placed under house detention. Amnesty International has called on the authorities to disclose the details of their detention including as to how

they are being treated and immediately release those detained unless they are charged with a recognizably criminal offence. Amnesty International has also said that they should only be held in official and acknowledged places of detention and brought promptly before an independent judicial authority.