

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **India: Avoid excessive use of force, investigate killings in Kashmir valley**

Authorities in India should avoid excessive use of force while dealing with demonstrators in the Kashmir valley, Amnesty International said today.

Over the last month, a total of 11 persons, at least eight of them children between 13 and 19 years old, were allegedly killed in shootings by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) paramilitary personnel stationed across the Kashmir valley, as protestors defied curfew regulations, held violent demonstrations and often clashed with the security personnel in Srinagar, Sopore and other towns which were put under curfew.

Amnesty International has learned that the state authorities have ordered probes into some of the killings during the demonstrations at Srinagar, Sopore and Anantnag. The organization is calling on Indian authorities to investigate all the killings and bring to justice the security personnel, as well as any protesters who have violated an internationally cognizable criminal provision, in trials conforming with international standards.

The authorities have blamed the armed Lashkar-e-Toiba and other Kashmiri separatist organisations for instigating the protestors to throw stones and engage in violence. At least 35 people sustained injuries during the demonstrations so far.

On 11 June, 17-year-old Tufail Ahmed Mattoo of Srinagar was killed, according to initial reports, by a teargas shell fired by the police at the protestors. However, later reports said he was shot in the head. On 19 June, a Srinagar court has directed the state police to investigate this killing and submit its report by 28 June.

On 20 June, as protests over the killing of Tufail Ahmed Mattoo turned violent, a 24-year-old carpet weaver of Srinagar, Rafiq Ahmed Bangroo, sustained serious head injuries and went into coma. He died on 19 June at the hospital. Some reports suggest that he was beaten by the CRPF personnel during the protests. The next day witnessed further protests over the death of Bangroo, as youths returning from his funeral attacked a CRPF post and attempted to set fire to a CRPF armoured vehicle. A 19-year-old relative of Bangroo, Javed Malla, was killed in the CRPF firing.

On 25 June, two teenaged children, Firdous Ahmad Kakroo and Shakeel Ahmad Ganai were killed as the CRPF personnel fired at demonstrators demanding the bodies of two armed guerrillas killed by the security forces near the Sopore town, 55 km from Srinagar. Eyewitnesses had reported that the demonstrators set fire to the CRPF commanding officer's vehicle and attacked a security bunker. The authorities claimed that the two were armed guerrillas with close links with Lashkar-e-Toiba and the CRPF claimed that it had fired in self-defence.

Over the next two days, Sopore witnessed two more deaths – of 22-year-old Bilal Ahmed Wani and 17-year-old Tajamul Ahmad Bhat - as the CRPF personnel fired to quell protestors repeatedly defying curfew. On 28 June, demonstrators on the outskirts of Baramulla town clashed with the CRPF personnel after which another youth, Tariq Ahmed Rather was shot dead; the next day. The next day, three protestors, 15-year-old Ishfaq Ahmed Khanday, 17-year-old Imtiyaz Ahmed Itoo and 19-year-old Shujatul Islam – were shot dead in Anantnag district. While the initial reports said

they were killed in firing by the CRPF, later reports suggested that they had been initially detained and then killed.

Amnesty International reminds the Indian authorities that they have an obligation to protect the right to life in accordance with international law. This includes the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a state party, and standards such as the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, which state that firearms should be used only when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

A meeting convened by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on 29 June, directed the CRPF to exercise "maximum restraint and sensitivity" while assisting the state police in enforcing curfew regulations in the valley. Amnesty International is urging the Indian government to ensure implementation of its directives, and ensure protection of the right to life under international law.

### **Background**

The latest round of protests over extrajudicial executions in Kashmir commenced in late May after the Jammu and Kashmir authorities exhumed the remains of three young men allegedly killed by the Indian security forces at Machil in Baramulla district after they had been promised jobs as casual labourers for the security personnel stationed near the Line of Control (LoC) between India and Pakistan. An inquiry is being conducted into the killings.

The protests also coincided with the commencement of the annual Hindu pilgrimage to Amarnath in the valley, heightening security concerns and the recent Indo-Pakistan meeting at Islamabad last week.

### **Related**

India: Extrajudicial executions must be investigated and suspects prosecuted, AI Index: ASA 20/015/2010, 8 June 2010 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA20/015/2010/en>

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For comment, please call Amnesty International's India researcher Ramesh Gopalakrishnan, currently in New Delhi, on +91 97174 38759

For more information, please contact the Amnesty International press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: [press@amnesty.org](mailto:press@amnesty.org)

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK  
[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)