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Pakistan: Human rights defender, journalist and poet Ahmad Farhad detained in Azad Jammu and Kashmir

On 20 June 2026, the Pakistan police detained **Ahmad Farhad**, a Kashmiri human rights defender, journalist and poet in Bagh City, in Pakistan Administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). He was detained while traveling back home after covering the ongoing Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) protest in Rawalakot. The human rights defender is presently held at the Bagh City Police Station with no legal grounds or a formal arrest warrant.

Ahmad Farhad, is a human rights defender, journalist and poet from Azad Jammu and Kashmir who reports on social justice issues, human rights violations and on the suppression of peaceful people's movements for rights and justice. He has faced violent reprisals as a result of his work, including an abduction which later turned into an arrest in 2024, as well as criminalisation and stigmatisation by state authorities. Most recently Ahmad Farhad used his media platform, the Times of Kashmir, to report on the protest movement launched by the JAAC which has faced a disproportionate use of force and repression by state authorities. Thousands of protesters were reportedly arrested under the regressive Section 3, Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance, which permits preventive detention with limited recourse to judicial review.

On the intervening night of 20-21 June 2026 at around 1.00 am, Ahmad Farhad was driving back from the JAAC protest in Rawalakot to his home in Bagh City, AJK when he was detained by the Pakistan police. The human rights defender was taken to the Bagh City Police station where he has been detained since.

A week prior to his detention, human right defenders Ahmad Farhad was named in an First Information Report (FIR) by the Bagh police station under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. The latter is frequently used to ban public gatherings, protests, and rallies. Nonetheless, the defender was subsequently granted bail through court. To date, the police have not shared any FIR, detention order or basis for his present incarceration.

Front Line Defenders is extremely concerned for the safety of Ahmad Farhad while in custody, especially given his previous experience of enforced disappearance.

Pakistan has a record of systemic repression against any form of dissent, including those that peacefully advocate for justice and rights. In addition, internet blackouts and restrictions on movements in the region have prevented independent reporting and information flow on the extent of the violations.

Front Line Defenders condemns the repression in AJK, which is not an isolated case but instead part of a pattern of violence against individuals who speak out against authorities and seek to end

impunity for violations. Journalists such as Ahmad Farhad are especially vulnerable as they disrupt state mis/disinformation and report independently from the ground.

Front Line Defenders calls on authorities in Pakistan to:

1. Immediately release Ahmad Farhad and revoke all cases against him as we believe that he is being targeted as punishment for his legitimate reporting and human rights work;
2. Ensure Ahmad Farhad's safety during his detention including access to his lawyers and family members
3. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Pakistan are protected and can carry out their work in safety and free from reprisals.

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