

## DOMICIDE, ARRESTS, AND HATE WAVE : KASHMIRIS PAY THE PRICE OF INDIAN FALSE FLAG OPERATION

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



Source: France 24

The 22 April attack in Pahalgam, in which 26 tourists including a national of Nepal, lost their lives caused a pall of gloom not only in India but also in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Consistent with the past pattern, without holding any investigation and sharing even a shred of evidence, India instantly blamed Pakistan for being behind the attack. Pakistan rejected these Indian allegations and proposed a ‘neutral and transparent’ investigation, to which India did not respond positively. The Modi government has used this attack to further advance its domestic political objectives and its strategic goals vis-a-vis Pakistan. New Delhi is also using the incident as a pretext to further crush the Kashmiri resistance movement and has unleashed a reign of terror. The people of IIOJK have been subjected to ‘collective punishment’, which international law recognizes as a crime against humanity.

### The ‘Collective Punishment’

Even though the people of IIOJK had expressed solidarity with the families of those killed in the Pahalgam attack by holding candlelight vigils and protest marches, the Indian security forces have reacted with employment of ferocious force against them and turned their lives into a nightmare. Kashmiri Muslims under Indian occupation have been made to watch their homes being demolished on the pretext that someone in the family was a part of some resistance force. For Indian

authorities, these demolitions are meant to "raise the costs of becoming a militant" – to instill fear in the hearts of the Kashmiri people.<sup>1</sup> In most cases, without any warning, the people of the area were rounded up in open areas or mosques only to realise a few moments later that their houses have been demolished using explosives that also damaged other properties in the neighbourhood. This gross injustice took place despite the fact that in November 2024, the Indian Supreme Court in a landmark verdict had barred the authorities from demolishing homes of people. "The executive [the government] cannot become a judge and demolish properties. The chilling sight of a bulldozer demolishing a building reminds one of lawlessness where might was right," the Supreme Court had observed.<sup>2</sup> Some ten houses of alleged resistance fighters were demolished, before this barbarity was halted following strong protests and push-back by regional parties including the National Conference (NC), People's Democratic Party (PDP), Awami Ittehad Party (JKAIP), and J&K Peoples Conference (JKPC).<sup>3</sup> Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said that while the guilty must be punished without mercy, "don't let innocent people become collateral damage"<sup>4</sup>. The PDP leader and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti insisted that the government must distinguish between "terrorists and civilians".<sup>5</sup>

As usual, the Kashmiri youth have been the particular target of the Indian security forces. Within days of the Pahalgam incident, India arrested around 3,000 young Kashmiris – with at least 100 taken into custody under the infamous Public Safety Act (PSA). At least two young Kashmiris have reportedly died in police and Army custody – one in a staged encounter in Bandipora<sup>6</sup>, and another in Kulgam district,<sup>7</sup> where his body was later recovered from the Vishaw River in south Kashmir. The situation forced PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti to say: "No democratic and responsible society can or should accept such treatment

1 "After Pahalgam: Kashmiris face the wreckage of collective punishment," *The Business Standard*, May 7, 2025, <https://www.tbsnews.net/thoughts/after-pahalgam-kashmiris-face-wreckage-collective-punishment-1136116>

2 Cherylann Mollan, "India's top court bans 'bulldozer justice' as punishment," *BBC*, November 13, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0k8d3ynvzxo>

3 Peerzada Ashiq, "Pahalgam terror attack: Demolition drive paused in Kashmir but crackdown on supporters of terrorists intensified," *The Hindu*, April 29, 2025, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/demolition-drive-paused-in-kashmir-but-crackdown-on-supporters-of-terrorists-intensified/article69502343.ece>

4 "Punish the guilty but don't let innocent become collateral damage": J-K CM Omar Abdullah calls for "decisive" fight against terrorism," *ANI*, April 27, 2025, <https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/punish-guilty-but-dont-let-innocent-become-collateral-damage-j-k-cm-omar-abdullah-calls-for-decisive-fight-against-terrorism20250427181438/>

5 "Anti-terror crackdown: Centre should tread carefully, not alienate innocent people, says Mehbooba Mufti," *Times of India*, April 27, 2025, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/anti-terror-crackdown-centre-should-tread-carefully-not-alienate-innocent-people-says-mehbooba-mufti/articleshow/120667505.cms>

6 Jehangir Ali, "He Was Our Only Breadwinner": Family of Bandipora Man Killed in 'Encounter' Seeks Probe," *The Wire*, May 1, 2025, <https://thewire.in/rights/he-was-our-only-breadwinner-family-of-bandipora-man-killed-in-encounter-seeks-probe>

7 "Kashmir Youth Picked Up By Army After Pahalgam Found Dead; NC, PDP Allege Foul Play," *The Wire*, May 4, 2025, <https://thewire.in/security/kashmir-youth-picked-up-army-found-dead-nc-pdp-foul-play>

of its own people”.<sup>8</sup> She also alleged that civilians who voluntarily presented themselves for questioning to assist the investigation were labelled as overground workers of resistance forces and returned to their families in body bags.<sup>9</sup>

This ‘collective punishment’ for Kashmiris was not confined to the IIOJK region alone. Kashmiris doing business and Kashmiri students studying in different cities of India also came under attack. The Indian media itself extensively covered the harassment that the Kashmiri students and workers in various parts of India were subjected to.<sup>10</sup> Kashmiri students and workers were refused grocery items and given ultimatums to return to IIOJK immediately.<sup>11</sup> Members of the Hindu Raksha Dal in Uttarakhand reportedly threatened Kashmiri students and urged the majority community to identify and assault them.<sup>12</sup> In many cities like Nagpur<sup>13</sup> (where the RSS is headquartered), Uttarakhand and Chandigarh,<sup>14</sup> Kashmiri students were assaulted by the Hindu majority community. Similarly, the video of a Kashmiri shawl vendor being harassed and assaulted by Hindutva activists in Mussoorie went viral on the social media. Social media was also flooded with hateful comments for Kashmir and the Kashmiris. The “Stop Hindu Hate Advocacy Network” demanded on X that “Kashmir should be flattened like Gaza”.<sup>15</sup> Even the widow of a Navy officer who was killed in the Pahalgam attack

<sup>8</sup> “Security agencies’ response to Pahalgam more like a sweeping crackdown: Mehbooba in letter to L-G,” *Deccan Herald*, May 6, 2025, <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/jammu-and-kashmir/security-agencies-response-to-pahalgam-more-like-a-sweeping-crackdown-mehbooba-in-letter-to-l-g-3526781>

<sup>9</sup> “Collective Punishment is not how democratic society responds to tragedy : Mehbooba Mufti,” *The Hindu*, May 5, 2025, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/jammu-and-kashmir/collective-punishment-is-not-how-democratic-society-responds-to-tragedy-mehbooba-mufti/article69542266.ece>

<sup>10</sup> TRT World (@trtworld), “Kashmiri students and Muslims across India are reporting threats, harassment and attacks after the deadly April 22 Pahalgam terrorist attack,” X, April 25, 2025, 2:45pm, <https://x.com/trtworld/status/1915703739840712893>

<sup>11</sup> Zulfikar Majid, “haunted by hate: As terror strikes Pahalgam, Kashmiris trapped in cycle of fear and blame,” *Deccan Herald*, April 27, 2025, <https://www.deccanherald.com/amp/story/india/haunted-by-hate-as-terror-strikes-pahalgam-kashmiris-trapped-in-cycle-of-fear-and-blame-3512951>

<sup>12</sup> Nasir Khuehami (@NasirKhuehami), “8th Incident: Second Open Threat Call. Hindutva outfit Hindu Raksha Dal has once again openly issued threats to identify and physically assault Kashmiri Muslim students,” X, April 24, 2025, 9:07 am, [https://x.com/NasirKhuehami/status/1915256141195641030?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1915256141195641030%7Ctwgr%5Ed1254c9afe1b562cab6fc018c229f6e10583131f%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_%2F%2Fwww.newindianexpress.com%2Fnation%2F2025%2FApr%2F24%2Fkashmiri-students-assaulted-harassed-across-india-after-pahalgam-terror-attack](https://x.com/NasirKhuehami/status/1915256141195641030?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1915256141195641030%7Ctwgr%5Ed1254c9afe1b562cab6fc018c229f6e10583131f%7Ctwcon%5Es1_%2F%2Fwww.newindianexpress.com%2Fnation%2F2025%2FApr%2F24%2Fkashmiri-students-assaulted-harassed-across-india-after-pahalgam-terror-attack)

<sup>13</sup> Nasir Khuehami (@NasirKhuehami), “Jammu and Kashmir Student Brutally Assaulted in Nagpur, Maharashtra this evening,” X, April 27, 2025, 11:32pm, [https://x.com/nasirkhuehami/status/1916561009344758168?s=48&t=P22OZA4ph9-A8F0z\\_P2n8g](https://x.com/nasirkhuehami/status/1916561009344758168?s=48&t=P22OZA4ph9-A8F0z_P2n8g)

<sup>14</sup> The Observer Post, “Kashmiri Students Brutally Attacked in Chandigarh Hostel” You Tube Video, 1:12, Posted April 24, 2024, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICGw\\_Qv9Pc8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICGw_Qv9Pc8)

<sup>15</sup> Stop Hindu Hate Advocacy (@HinduHate), “Kashmir should be flattened like Gaza. Both don't deserve freedom,” X, April 23, 2025, 4:11am., <https://x.com/HinduHate/status/1914819378887188826>

was not spared by right-wing Hindu trolls after she appealed not to target innocent Kashmiris and Muslims across India.<sup>16</sup>

The effects of the Pahalgam incident are being felt by the Muslims of India as well. Soon after, the Indian YouTube was abuzz with a song filled with hatred for the Muslims. The lyrics *"We made a mistake by allowing you to stay on, You got your own country, why didn't you leave then? were designed to ostracize the Muslim community in India. The song titled "Pehle Dharam Pocha" (They Asked About Religion First)* had garnered 1.5 million views as of May 8, 2025.<sup>17</sup>

This hate-driven violence against Kashmiris and Indian Muslims also drew the attention of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The Commission reminded India of its binding obligations towards fundamental human rights under *Articles 2, 18, 26, and 27* of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), *Article 2(2)* of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and *Article 4* of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). The IPHRC demanded that India must refrain from scapegoating Muslims for the Pahalgam incident and that the government of India must ensure safety and security of the Muslim community. It also demanded that the government of India bring those responsible for hate crimes to justice as well.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusion

While the Indian government had been peddling the narrative of 'peace', 'normalcy' and 'development', the fact of the matter is that the IIOJK remains the most militarized zone in the world. It is an occupied territory where Indian security forces operate with complete impunity under draconian laws like the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFPSA) and the Public Safety Act (PSA). It is the region where raising voice against tyranny or reporting the truth on news outlets is a punishable crime, while human dignity and human rights are continuously trampled under feet. The wave of 'collective punishment' following the Pahalgam incident is a prime example of vicious reprisals, retribution, and lawless conduct of the occupying authorities. Arbitrary arrests of the

<sup>16</sup> Nikita Yadav, "How Kashmir attack victim's widow went from symbol of tragedy to trolling target," BBC, April 6, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cr5dgvnm6y5o>

<sup>17</sup> Kavi Singh Official, "Pehle Dharam Pucha", *You Tube Post*, 4:39, posted April 23, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTZlXrZYnuc>

<sup>18</sup> "OIC-IPHRC expresses deep concerns over the alarming rise in Islamophobia, hate-motivated violence, and targeted reprisal attacks against Muslim communities in India and Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) in the aftermath of a tragic attack on tourists in Pahalgam district of IOJK and calls for the protection of the rights and fundamental freedoms of Muslims in India," *Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)*, May 3, 2025, <https://www.oic-iphrc.org/home/article/599>

youth, torture, custodial deaths, extra-judicial killings and demolitions of houses leave the besieged Kashmiris in deep emotional and financial stress and trauma. The plight of the people of IIOJK continues to be a test for the conscience of humanity, and particularly for the countries that purport to be the standard-bearers of human rights in the world.