

28 September 2020

### **India: Human rights lawyer Babar Qadri killed**

On 24 September 2020, human rights lawyer **Babar Qadri**, was shot by unidentified gunmen outside his home in Hawal, Srinagar. The human rights defender was rushed to hospital, but was pronounced dead on arrival. Three days prior to the shooting, on 21 September 2020, Babar Qadri tweeted about a possible threat to his life.

Babar Qadri was a human rights lawyer who was at the forefront of human rights defence in Kashmir for over a decade. He was one of the founding members of “Kashmir Thinkers Guild”, a local initiative for educating and mobilising students, social activists and environmental rights defenders. He was also a member of “Initiative for Peace and Justice” an organisation working to promote peace in the highly volatile region. In his capacity, the defender engaged in organising human rights seminars, awareness campaigns and peaceful demonstrations to highlight the plight of Kashmiris. As a lawyer, Babar Qadri had taken up several cases involving human rights violations against children and actively worked for a stronger juvenile justice system.

On 24 September 2020, two unidentified gunmen shot human rights lawyer Babar Qadri outside his residence in Hawal, Srinagar, after pretending to seek his legal advice. He succumbed to his injuries while on route to the hospital. Although Babar Qadri had not yet filed an official complaint, on 21 September 2020, he shared a screenshot of intimidatory comments he had received on social media, [tweeting](#) that he feared that it could lead to a threat to his life.

Babar Qadri had for years been a vocal presence in many mainstream media debates in the region. He called out human rights abuses from separatist factions and political leaders alike, which frequently brought him opposition from both parties. He has been subjected to frequent threats and beatings over the years, most notably when he was violently attacked in 2009 while working for the Save Chinar Movement, which campaigns against the illegal felling of Chinar trees, a tree considered part of the cultural heritage of Kashmir.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killing of Babar Qadri, which it believes was solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful activities in the defence of human rights. It is concerned about the ongoing and increasingly hostile environment that human rights defenders are faced with in Kashmir and urges the Indian Government to take all measures necessary to build safe and enabling environment that adheres to its international human rights obligations.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in India to:**

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of human rights defender Babar Qadri, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in India are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals, and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.