**25 Years later: Getting away with extrajudicial execution of Jalil Andrabi**

[Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/dr-ghulam-nabi-fai/)

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One of the darkest chapters of Indian judicial partiality was left hanging half closed and banging in the wind when Major Avtar Singh, the killer of internationally known human rights activist and Chairman of Kashmir Commission of Jurists, Advocate Jalil Andrabi, was found dead after he killed his wife and two children, and finally himself on June 9, 2012, in Selma, California. Avtar Singh, a fugitive from justice, who lived in the hot dry central California community, was clearly haunted by his past, a past that had seen the blood spilled of more than one man by his own hands. He had killed four others to hide the murder of Andrabi, and then he had killed his own family.

In killing Jalil Andrabi, Avtar Singh certainly did not act on his own volition. He was only a major. His act was no doubt a response to orders from above and occurred in a longstanding climate of impunity that the Indian army enjoys in Kashmir. And Jalil Andrabi had become a hated, despised man by the Army, a man dangerous to the status quo of continued murder and torture that had been taking place in Kashmir’s jails, interrogation centers and detention facilities for many years.

The real killers are still at large. The real killers are not just army officers but all those from the highest office in India on down through Parliament who had arranged his escape from Kashmir to Canada before he moved illegally to the United States, or looked the other way and refused to extradite him when California authorities notified India that they had their man. They are guilty of maintaining murderous policies, defending hideous acts that take place, encouraging even more grotesque behavior by the mere act of covering up what does occur and failing to prosecute those who have used the law vindictively and without justifiable reason.

We hope now that silence and passivity of world powers will prick the conscience of Biden Administration and motivate her to end these crimes against humanity. Their justice is awaited

Jalil Andrabi had been a friend of mine. His trip to Geneva in August 1995 shortly before his murder to attend the ‘47th session of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Human Rights ‘was at my invitation, as were other international engagements he had attended in Geneva, Washington, New York and elsewhere. On one such occasion, we had travelled by car together, along with my wife, to attend a national convention of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) that was held between September 1 – 4, 1995 in Columbus, Ohio, in order to talk and exchange views intimately on various issues on which we shared an interest. It was on this trip that I gained a much deeper appreciation for Jalil Andrabi’s character. He was a man of deep compassion and vision, high intellect and deep judicial insight and had been personally responsible for bringing many human rights violations in Kashmir into the light of day. Jalil spoke at ISNA convention which was attended by more than 25,000 people.

During the United Nations Sub-Commission, Dr. Nazir Gilani, President, JKCHR hosted a dinner in honour of Jalil Andrabi which was attended by many international NGO’s. Dr. Gilani played an important role during the Commission to declare Jalil Andrabi as a ‘UN Protected Person’. Following year Dr. Gilani organized a memorial for Jalil Andrabi on April 1, 1996 in Geneva to pay respect to his friend who fell to a death under torture for cause – that we all – so dearly uphold.

During the Commission, Jalil Andrabi made multiple interventions, one on August 7, 1995, under agenda item 18, when he said,” The atrocities, which are perpetrated upon my people are not aberrations but rather integral components of a systematic policy. These atrocities are being perpetrated as a weapon of war in order to break the will of the people.” Advocate Jalil Andrabi knew first hand the facts. He had been documenting the human rights violations by taking information from victim’s families and witnesses. In personal conversations he had told me how very difficult it was for lawyers to meet with the detainees and how much they are under pressure, and he had also told me that because of his political views the Indian Army had often harassed him.

I wanted to invite Jalil Andrabi again in 1996 to attend the United Nations Commission in Geneva, but unfortunately in March of that year, while he was returning home to Srinagar with his wife, the car was stopped, and he was taken into custody. Twenty days later, his dead body was seen floating in the Jehlum River. He had been shot, his hands were tied and his eyes were gouged out. He had been tortured mercilessly, an inhuman brutality which can never properly be explained.

Here in Washington, the spokesperson of the State Department, Mr. Nicholas Burns issued a statement on March 29, 1996, condemning the killing of Jalil Andrabi and called upon the government of India to conduct a full and transparent investigation into the circumstances surrounding Andrabi’s abduction and murder.

Such a statement was also issued by the UN Human Rights Commissioner Jose Ayala Lasso condemning the murder and calling for an impartial investigation.

Unfortunately despite this condemnation at a global level, the government of India not only did not punish the perpetrator but did not even arrest the main culprit. When the Jammu & Kashmir High Court found Major Avtar Singh to be the person who killed Jalil Andrabi, the High Court ordered his arrest in 1997. The judge who did so was punished by immediately being transferred from Kashmir to India. In addition, because Indian army personnel have full immunity in Kashmir, the government of India arranged a passport despite the court order for his arrest, and facilitated his exit from India to Canada and then to USA to save him from any legal proceedings.

It is important to note that it was our State Department which in 1995 not only condemned the murder of Jalil Andrabi but asked for an impartial investigation and had hoped the murderers would be quickly apprehended and punished. Twenty-five years later, the justice has not been served. We hope now that silence and passivity of world powers will prick the conscience of Biden Administration and motivate her to end these crimes against humanity. Their justice is awaited.

*Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai is the Secretary General, World Kashmir Awareness Forum, Washington, D.C.*