# LGBTQ Kashmiri students face targeted harassment after Baisaran Valley attack amid calls for solidarity



On April 22, a tragic attack unfolded in Baisaran Valley, a scenic Kashmiri meadow surrounded by pine trees, where Hindu tourists were gathering. Amidst the serene landscape by the Lidder River, known for its tranquil beauty and cultural significance, terrorists opened fire on groups of tourists, specifically targeting Hindu men after checking their religion. The assault resulted in the death of 26 people, including 25 tourists and Syed Adil Hussain Shah, a local pony guide who lost his life protecting others. Among the victims was also a Navy officer on his honeymoon. More than 20 individuals were injured during this attack.

The Resistance Front, a group based in Pakistan with ties to the Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist organisation, initially claimed responsibility for the shootings. However, they retracted the claim three days later, reportedly due to fears of a strong diplomatic and military response from India. This response included tightened border security and the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty.

The incident sparked significant outrage across India, but unfortunately, this anger was misdirected towards Kashmiri students in various cities including Dehradun and Jalandhar. Many of these students faced harassment, evictions, and threats of violence, particularly those who identified as LGBTQ. The Jammu and Kashmir Students Association received over 1,000 distress calls, highlighting the scale of the crisis. In response, Kashmiri Chief Minister Omar Abdullah urged state governments to ensure the protection of these students.

Activists nationwide have mobilised to support the vulnerable LGBTQ Kashmiri students. Harish Iyer, a prominent activist, extended offers of shelter and legal aid to affected students in Mumbai. Speaking to the Washington Blade, Iyer reflected on the broader implications of the attack, stating, “Religion is a tool used by terrorists worldwide to ensure that their victims divert their energy towards fighting each other while they continue to focus on our destruction. It is a tried and tested formula designed to divide us while we should all be united against them.”

Iyer shared his concern over videos of targeted attacks on Kashmiri students and highlighted the compounded vulnerabilities faced by individuals at the intersection of multiple identities — queer, Muslim, and Kashmiri. He remarked, “In a moment where hate reveals its fang, it is important that love opens its home too.” Despite some victims declining his offer to relocate due to finding safe places elsewhere, Iyer emphasized the unity within the community, saying, “The community stands united with each other against terror.”

Anish Gawande, the queer spokesperson for the Nationalist Congress Party, has also been actively involved in supporting Kashmiris. Having worked in Kashmir since 2012, Gawande runs programmes for Kashmiri journalism students and art residencies. Addressing the Washington Blade, he noted the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ Kashmiri students as “a minority within a minority.” He acknowledged the rise in violence and praised activists like Harish Iyer for their support. Gawande stressed the importance of preventing terrorists' aims to divide communities from succeeding.

Gawande has been collaborating with student leaders such as Nasir Khuehami of the J&K Students Association to ensure the safety of Kashmiris throughout India. He also expressed gratitude towards central and state governments for their prompt actions in addressing these security concerns.

Highlighting ongoing efforts to promote communal harmony, Gawande recently led multi-faith prayer services in Srinagar across temples, churches, gurdwaras, and dargahs. He stated, “When attempts are being made to divide us on religious grounds, we must unite through religion.” Additionally, he invited Kashmiri LGBTQ students to reach out to the J&K Students Association for support and offered his own residence and party offices across India as safe spaces.

Reflecting on the significance of solidarity, Gawande said, “Queerness has taught me that we have two kinds of families — those of birth and of choice.” He affirmed his commitment to Kashmir, saying, “When the well-being of those who I consider family is under threat, there is no question of even thinking about any potential jeopardizing of my own safety.”

The Washington Blade is reporting that the incident and its aftermath expose complex social dynamics that affect multiple vulnerable groups in the region, with activists and community members responding to provide protection and support amid increased tensions.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.ft.com/content/7d662fb3-066f-46da-9f78-cce871358c7b> - This article reports on the April 22, 2025, attack in Pahalgam, detailing the deaths of at least 26 people, including 25 tourists and a local pony guide, and the subsequent diplomatic tensions between India and Pakistan.
* <https://apnews.com/article/dc7067a18899d9e7ff7726d4e05982c3> - This report provides details on the attack in Baisaran Valley, including the number of fatalities and injuries, and the international condemnation that followed.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_Pahalgam_attack> - This Wikipedia page offers a comprehensive overview of the attack, including the timeline, victims, and the initial claim of responsibility by The Resistance Front, which was later retracted.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/how-militants-attacked-tourists-kashmirs-pahalgam-indias-response-2025-04-23/> - This article describes the attack in Baisaran Valley, the response from Indian authorities, and the impact on tourism in the region.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_India%E2%80%93Pakistan_standoff> - This page details the diplomatic crisis between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgam attack, including the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty and border skirmishes.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baisaran_Valley> - This article provides information about Baisaran Valley, the location of the attack, and its significance as a tourist destination.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMioAFBVV95cUxOb2ZXXzBRU2tXWjd1cDU3U1lnNk9EQVpFTzVKSDEtUTFKVEwwaUJIeFVORDBpVlk1S2x6d082NkJRX21iTk1YSTlNWU1yS003UkdwZlpkdzBVZ09rZUdXeWNoQVJYUVgzVkxYSkw3Vm1GbkR6WWR2aGVFenQzVTlES2hTUWY3Nk9mamdtWS10Rzc3ZTY5UDE2M3lMamRWbExY?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data