



World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR)

A Representative Body of Sikh Institutions of America Working under the Patronage of Siri Akal Takhat Sahib

P.O. Box 3635, Columbus, Ohio 43210, USA

Phone: 614-210-0591, Fax: 419-535-6794

E-mail: contact@worldsikhcouncil.org, Website: www.worldsikhcouncil.org

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Member Gurdwaras:

1. Gurdwara Sahib Fremont, Fremont, CA
2. Guru Nanak Sikh Mission, Livingston, CA
3. Sikh Gurdwara of LA, North Hollywood, CA
4. Sikh Gurdwara Riverside, Riverside, CA
5. Colorado Singh Sabha, Denver, CO
6. Guru Singh Sabha of Augusta, Augusta, GA
7. Sikh Study Circle of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA
8. Sikh Religious Society of Chicago, Palatine, IL
9. Sikh Society of South, New Orleans, LA
10. Sikh Gurdwara of Michigan, Rochester Hills, MI
11. Sikh Society of Michigan, Madison Heights, MI
12. Sikh Gurdwara of North Carolina, Durham, NC
13. Garden State Sikh Association, Pluckemin, NJ
14. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Glenrock, NJ
15. Sikh Cultural Society Inc., Richmond Hills, NY
16. Sikh Cultural & Edu. Society of Western NY, Buffalo, NY
17. Sikh Religious Society of Dayton, Dayton, OH
18. Guru Nanak Found. of Greater Cleveland, Richfield, OH
19. Guru Gobind Singh Sikh Society, Bedford, OH
20. Guru Nanak Religious Soc. of Central Ohio, Columbus, OH
21. Tristate Sikh Cultural Society, Monroeville, PA
22. Mid South Sikh Sabha, Memphis, TN
23. Sikh Center of Gulf Coast, Houston, TX
24. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Richardson, TX
25. Sikh Gurdwara of North Texas, Garland, TX
26. Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Fairfax, VA
27. Sikh Association of Central Virginia, VA
28. Sikh Religious Society of Wisconsin, Brookfield, WI

Other Sikh Institution Members:

1. Siri Guru Granth Sahib Found., Anaheim, CA
2. Sikh Mediawatch and Resource Task Force, Washington, DC
3. Sikhs Serving America, Topeka, KS
4. Sikh Youth Federation of North America, White Plains, NY
5. Sikh Coalition, New York, NY
6. Sikh Educational & Religious Foundation, Dublin, OH
7. Sikh Youth Federation of USA, Toledo, OH
8. Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Arlington, TX

Contact: Dr. Tarunjit Singh, Secretary General
614-210-0591, contact@worldsikhcouncil.org

Sikh Community to Hold Prayer Vigils Across the US on June 5

The Sikh community of the US will be gathering across the country on the evening of Saturday, June 5, 2004 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the attack by the Indian Army on Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) and other historical Sikhs places of worship in Punjab, and to remember the thousands of Sikhs killed in the brutal pre-planned army action.

The national prayer vigil organized by World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR) will be held on Saturday, June 5 at 7:00 PM at the California State Capitol in Sacramento, California. Mirror prayer vigils have been coordinated by WSC-AR at the following locations for the evening of June 5:

- Phoenix, Arizona
- Southington, Connecticut
- Fort Lauderdale, Florida
- Atlanta, Georgia
- Augusta, Georgia
- Des Moines, Iowa
- Shawnee, Kansas
- Carteret, New Jersey
- Lawrenceville, New Jersey
- Staten Island, New York
- Williamsville, New York
- Cleveland, Ohio
- Dallas, Texas
- Brookfield, Wisconsin
- Richmond, Virginia

On June 5, 1984, the Indian Army (with 15,000 troops supported by tanks, artillery and helicopters, and with 35,000 paramilitary forces in reserve) attacked the Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) and more than 40 other Sikh shrines throughout Punjab, India.

The full-scale military invasion of Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) was launched on the anniversary of the Martyrdom of Siri Guru Arjan Sahib, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. Thousands of Sikhs – men, women and children – who had congregated for prayers were brutally gunned down, under complete news blackout. The Akaal Takhat, the Sikh seat of sovereignty, was destroyed in the attack and the Sikh Reference Library and Museum were looted and burned to ashes.

“The army went into Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple Complex) not to eliminate a political figure or a political movement but to suppress the culture of a people, to attack their heart, to strike a blow at their spirit and self-confidence” wrote Dr. Joyce Pettigrew in her 1995 book titled *The Sikhs of Punjab*.

The attack on the Golden Temple was the beginning of a formal assault on Sikhs and their places of worship by the Indian Government. In the last 20 years, more than a quarter million Sikhs are reported to have been killed in Punjab and rest of India.

“The Darbar Sahib is the Vatican, the Mecca, and the Jerusalem of the Sikhs. The Indian Army’s brutal pre-planned attack on the heart of the Sikh faith was an attempt to defame and humiliate the entire Sikh community. The Indian Government’s consistent attempts to humiliate Sikhs have not succeeded. Today, we stand before God as a community committed to peace and justice.” said Mr. Kuldeep Singh, Chairman of WSC-AR. He further added, “The Sikh community’s appeals of transparency, accountability, and restitution to the Indian Government have been ignored as not being in the interest of peace. Justice for Sikhs in India has been denied.”

WSC-AR is the only representative and elected body of Sikh Gurdwaras and institutions in the US. Its members include 28 Gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) and 8 other Sikh institutions across 17 US states. WSC-AR works to promote Sikh interests at the national and international level focusing on issues of advocacy, education, and well-being of humankind.

About 25 million Sikhs live across the world. Sikhs arrived in the US about a century ago and number about half a million today.

Some quotes from investigative and media reports pertaining to the June 1984 attack on the Golden Temple are attached below:

"The whole of Punjab and especially the Golden Temple Complex, was turned into a murderous mouse trap from where people could neither escape nor could they seek succor of any kind...The way the dead bodies were disposed of adds to the suspicions regarding the number and nature of the casualties...The bodies of the victims of military operation in Punjab were unceremoniously destroyed without any attempt to identify them and hand them over to their relatives...So even the courtesy and honor customarily shown to the dead soldiers of the enemy was not shown to our dead countrymen, since those killing them were our own soldiers. Because the government had decided to exterminate these victims physically they ceased to exist as persons deserving any honor of human dignity. We lack even the civility of the British imperialists, who after the Jalianwala blood bath instituted the Hunter Commission to make a thorough enquiry into the events. The government, after the operation, on the other hand, did

every thing in its power to cover up the excesses of the army action...The most disturbing thing about the entire operation was that a whole mass of men, women, and children were ordered to be killed merely on the suspicion that some terrorists were operating from the Golden Temple and other Gurdwaras. There had been no judicial verdict of guilt against definite individuals who had been taking shelter in the Golden Temple." (CKC Reddy, et. al., Army Action in Punjab: Prelude & Aftermath, New Delhi: Samata Era Publication, 1984, pp. 46-48)

"...an undeclared, unilateral ruthless war - against hundred of innocent defenceless men and women in far-away tiny villages of Punjab from where their voices do not reach the rest of India...In the name of curbing terrorism, unabashed state terrorism has been unleashed on the Sikhs branding them as criminals, arbitrary arrests and McCarthy style witch-hunt, sadistic torture...shooting down of young men in false encounters are common occurrences; even village women are not spared, they are being harassed and beaten up, dishonored and taken away to Police Stations or to unknown destinations...The eye witnesses witnessed the use of gas by the Army, the pile of dead bodies on the 'Parikarma,' the arrival of tanks which some of them thought were the ambulances, the hovering of helicopter at night, throwing their search light on targets which were bombed, the wanton destruction of the Akal Takht (the Eternal Throne), the Research Library and the Museum...Today, it is the State itself which openly indulges not only in murder and assault but also in inhuman torture, molestation of women...and false encounters leading to gruesome death...Our visit was almost like lifting the corner of a veil to discover a face - an amazing face full of conflicting emotions, suffering yet defiant, anguished yet challenging, tortured yet proud." (Judge V.M. Tarkunde, et. al., Oppression in Punjab: Report to the Nation, New Delhi: Citizens for Democracy, 1985, pp. 8-10, 18-19)

"The pattern in each village appears to be the same. The Army moves in during the early evening, cordons a village, and announces over loudspeakers that everyone must come out. All males between the ages of 15 and 35 are trussed and blindfolded, then taken away...Thousands have disappeared in the Punjab since the Army Operation began. The government has provided no lists of names; families don't know if sons and husbands are arrested underground or dead." (Mary Anne Weaver, The Christian Science Monitor, October 15, 1984)

"On the strength of... constitutional features, India claims to be the largest functional democracy in the world where wide-spread human rights abuses, systematic persecution of estranged communities and suppression of political dissent cannot occur. However, the experiences of the Sikhs in Punjab show that as a demonised community targeted for abuse by the authorities, they had no protection from the leaders of the supposedly independent institutions, including the judiciary, either in shielding their fundamental rights against imminent violations or in obtaining acknowledgement and legal restitution of wrongs. Freedom of discourse remained an empty promise which even the higher judiciary joined the chorus to turn the page and obliterate the victims' memory on the grounds that a public discussion and scrutiny focusing on past abuses and the role of institutions would undermine the interests of peace and social order." (Ram Narayan Kumar, et. al., Reduced to Ashes (Volume One), Asia Forum for Human Rights, Kathmandu, Nepal, May 2003, pp. 75, www.punjabjustice.org/report/report.htm)
