



World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR)

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 28, 2004

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. Guru Nanak Foundation of Jackson, MS
13. Sikh Gurdwara of North Carolina, Durham, NC
14. Garden State Sikh Association, Bridgewater, NJ
15. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Glenrock, NJ
16. Sikh Cultural Society Inc., Richmond Hills, NY
17. Sikh Cultural & Edu. Society of Western NY, Buffalo, NY
18. Sikh Religious Society of Dayton, Dayton, OH
19. Guru Nanak Found. of Greater Cleveland, Richfield, OH
20. Guru Gobind Singh Sikh Society, Bedford, OH
21. Guru Nanak Religious Soc. of Central Ohio, Columbus, OH
22. Tristate Sikh Cultural Society, Monroeville, PA
23. Mid South Sikh Sabha, Memphis, TN
24. Sikh Center of Gulf Coast, Houston, TX
25. Siri Guru Singh Sabha, Richardson, TX
26. Sikh Gurdwara of North Texas, Garland, TX
27. Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Fairfax, VA
28. Sikh Association of Central Virginia, VA
29. Sikh Religious Society of Wisconsin, Brookfield, WI

Other Sikh Institution Members:

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

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

World Sikh Council – America Region Condemns Denial of Justice to Sikh Victims of November 1984 in India; Urges World Community and UN to Demand Transparency, Accountability, and Restitution from India; Supports USCIRF Recommendation to Designate India as a “Country of Particular Concern”

On the 20th anniversary of the massacre of thousands of Sikh men, women, and children across India, the World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR) remembers and pays tribute to the Sikhs and their families who were affected by this genocidal pogrom.

WSC-AR condemns the continued denial of justice by the Indian Government to the Sikh victims of November 1984. It urges the world community and the Secretary General of the United Nations to demand transparency, accountability, and restitution from India, which claims to be the world’s largest functional democracy.

WSC-AR supports the February 2004 recommendation of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to the United States Government to designate India as a “Country of Particular Concern.” The Commission makes such a recommendation for countries whose governments may have “engaged in or tolerated systematic, ongoing, and egregious abuses of freedom of religion.”

WSC-AR strongly urges Sikhs all over the world to redouble their support (both moral and financial) to the families of the victims. WSC-AR also calls upon Sikhs in the US to participate in vigils and memorials being organized in your local areas.

The assassination of the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984, allegedly by two Sikh members of her security force, triggered an orgy of violence and ethnic cleansing against Sikhs in India's capital city of New Delhi and across the country.

“Almost as many Sikhs died in a few days in India in 1984 than all the deaths and disappearances in Chile during the 17-year military rule of Gen. Augusto Pinochet between 1973 and 1990.... Not only Chile, but also Argentina, Peru, Mexico, South Africa, and Ethiopia, among other nations, have been addressing atrocities from decades past. India, in refusing to confront its bloody recent history, stands in glaring contrast to these nations”, writes Barbara Crossette, the New York Times Bureau Chief in Delhi from 1988 to 1991, in her recent article titled “India's Sikhs: Waiting for Justice” published in the Summer 2004 issue of World Policy Journal.

“The planned brutal massacre and ethnic cleansing of Sikhs twenty years ago, and the inability of several commissions of inquiry and various political parties in power at the federal level to fix responsibility for this ethnic cleansing indicates that justice delayed to Sikhs in India is indeed justice denied,” said Mr. Kuldeep Singh, Chairperson of WSC-AR.

“The Sikh community's repeated appeals for transparency, accountability, and restitution to the Indian Government have been ignored as not being in the interest of peace. We pay homage to the victims of state terrorism in India and pray for divine blessings on the survivors who are still suffering from the trauma of this genocide,” said Dr. Gurcharan Singh, Vice-Chairperson of WSC-AR.

“The Indian Government's brutal pre-planned genocidal attempts on the Sikh faith have not succeeded. Today, we stand before God as a community committed to peace with justice. To secure a true peace, justice must prevail,” said Dr. Anahat Kaur, a member of the Executive Committee of WSC-AR.

Printed media and citizen commission reports show that following the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984, thousands of Sikh men and women were killed and raped across India for a period of at least two weeks.

These reports show that during this pogrom, thousands of Sikh men were murdered, some necklaced with tires soaked in kerosene and set afire by jubilant mobs, and thousands of Sikh women were publicly raped, many in front of their male relatives.

A published citizen's commission report states one Sikh woman's harrowing experience: “The women were herded together into one room. Some of them ran away but were pursued to the nearby nallah (stream) where they were raped. Their shrieks and cries for help fell on deaf ears. From among the women held in the room, hoodlums asked each other to select whomsoever they chose. All the women were stripped and many dishonored. She herself was raped by ten men. Their lust satisfied, they told the women to get out, naked as they were. For fear of their lives they did so, hiding their shame as best as possible. Each begged or borrowed a garment from relenting neighbours and sought shelter wherever they could.” (Delhi: 31 October to 4 November 1984, Report of the Citizen's Commission, January 1985, pp. 18-19.)

The Indian Government estimated the number of persons killed in Delhi alone during the first three days of November 1984 at nearly 2,700. A list of 3,870 names of Sikhs killed was published by Indian Express, November 1, 1989. The total for the country is estimated to be about 20,000, with 10,000 in Delhi alone. Several citizen commission reports have documented that the leaders of India's ruling Congress Party and officials of the Government organized and encouraged these massacres of Sikhs to "teach the Sikhs a lesson."

The massacre and faked encounter killings of Sikhs, especially the Sikh youth, has continued since 1984 in India. In the last 20 years, more than a quarter million Sikhs are reported to have been killed.

"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," writes Mr. Ram Narayan Kumar, et. al. in a May 2003 report titled *Reduced to Ashes* (Volume One) published by the Asia Forum for Human Rights. (www.punjabjustice.org/report/report.htm)

WSC-AR is a representative and elected body of Sikh Gurdwaras and institutions in the United States. Its members include 29 Gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) and 7 other Sikh institutions across the nation.
