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# 1984 Sikhs' Kristallnacht



Sikh businesses and homes being torched, New Delhi, India, November 1984

*"Genocide, whether committed in  
time of peace or in time of war, is a  
crime under international law"*

UN Genocide Convention, 1948

# Introduction

In 1984, the Indian state organised and implemented two devastating massacres of the Sikh population of India, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Sikh civilians. This was a two part carnage. It was committed under the guise of an official military crackdown against 'terrorism' (June) and, subsequent, anti-Sikh pogroms (November).

This report is an earnest attempt to inform the minds and conscience of the world about these horrific actions of the "world's largest democracy". It presents the untold story of the Indian government's brutal punitive crackdown against an aggrieved and agitated community which has campaigned for 50 years for political, legal and human rights. It highlights the telling facts of how the Sikh community was singled out for an onslaught of arbitrary arrests, 'disappearances', torture and mass killings.

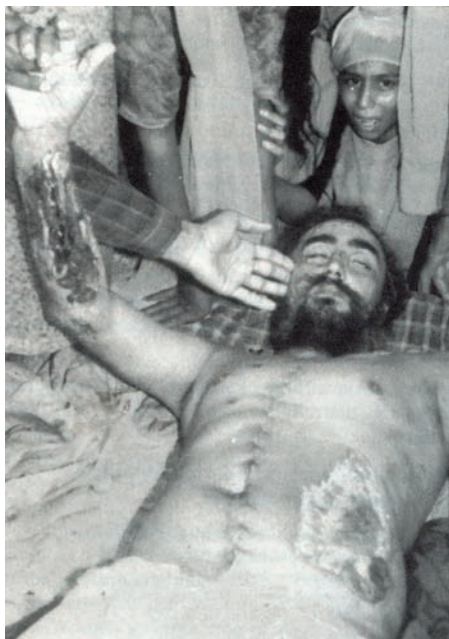
It draws upon numerous reports by international human rights organisations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and similar studies by human rights activists and journalists in India. The report is a call to the world, to learn and understand about the details of India's secret war against the Sikh people. 1984 was a real life demonstration of the brutish and murderous power of a monolithic state, as described in George Orwell's famous novel, named chillingly, 1984. Subsequent state organised massacres in India, like in Gujarat in 2002, provide us with a potent reminder of what went wrong with 'secular' India. This report, initially released in 2004 on the 20th anniversary of this tragedy, has been updated to include the Indian PM's 'apology' following the release of the Nanavati report of August 2005.

**'Though some will find the analogy with Nazi Germany here too extreme, both the explicit targeting of Sikhs as traitors following Operation Bluestar and the clear earmarking of Sikh residence and business in the post-assassination carnage speak to an incipient genocidal campaign'**

*Cynthia Keppley Mahmood  
Associate Professor of Anthropology  
University of Maine, Orono, USA*

**'The vast majority of victims were people who shared a common religious identity, the Sikhs. When an entire group representing a particular racial or religious identity are targeted for annihilation, and in consequence, hundreds of thousands of people are killed, the word for it is Genocide'**

*Inderjit Singh Jaijee  
Movement against State Repression  
India*



*Avtar Singh, beaten and tortured to death with a hot iron and electric shock by the Indian Police.*

**"There is plenty of evidence to show that extra-judicial killings are perpetrated on a large-scale by the police and security forces in Punjab, and that the conspiracy to mass murder extends up to the highest levels of government. "**

*Lord Avebury (Chair, British Parliamentary Human Rights Group,  
Letter to Mark Lennox Boyd, Junior Foreign Minister (9 April 1993)*

## **UN Convention on Genocide - Article Two**

Defines genocide as 'any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group - Killing members of the group; Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.'

**"It is important for all peoples that we seek not just the truth about the events of 1984 and beyond in Punjab but that we also act for justice."**



**Jeremy Dear  
General Secretary**

**National Union  
of Journalists**

## **Kristallnacht - 'Night of the broken glass' (November 9<sup>th</sup> 1938)**

After a German embassy official was assassinated in Paris by a Jew in revenge for the mass expulsion of Jews to Poland, attacks on the Jews soon followed. Though it was portrayed as a spontaneous outburst of popular outrage, these pogroms were organised and coordinated by Hitler's Nazis, who beat and murdered Jews throughout Germany and Austria. Synagogues and Jewish businesses were particular targets of attacks. The police and fire brigade looked on. Tens of thousands were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. This marked the beginning of the Holocaust, the mass killing of Europe's Jews.

The first wholesale attack on the Sikhs, code-named Operation Bluestar, commenced on 31st May 1984. It took the form of 150,000 Indian army troops being sent to the northern Indian state of Punjab, with helicopter gunships, tanks and modern weaponry. The state was sealed off from the external world. Journalists were removed. Telephone lines were cut, preventing internal and external communication. All news and information was controlled by the Indian government. All independent newspapers and radio stations were closed down. An indefinite curfew was imposed across the whole of Punjab, with 20 million residents placed in a state of siege and imprisonment.

"For five days the Punjab has been cut off from the rest of the world. There is a 24-hour curfew. All telephone and telex lines are cut. No foreigners are permitted entry and on Tuesday, all Indian journalists were expelled. There are no newspapers, no trains, no buses – not even a bullock cart can move". Orders to shoot on site, were widely carried out. The whole of Punjab, with its 5,000 villages and 50 major cities, was turned into a concentration camp. The rules were what the Indian army and its political decision makers decided.

Christian Science Monitor, 8th June 1984

On June 4th 1984, India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the Indian Army to invade the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar, the Sikhs' national institution. As it was the anniversary of the martyrdom of the Sikhs' 5<sup>th</sup> Guru (teacher), Guru Arjun Dev, it was full of thousands of pilgrims. Forty other shrines were simultaneously attacked using massive fire power. On the pretext of apprehending 'a handful of militants' lodged inside the Golden Temple, the Indian Army unleashed a terror unprecedented in



The Akal Takht on fire, June 6th 1984

post-independence India.

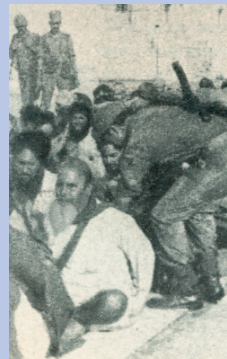
It took the use of Vijayanta tanks to win the fight for the army. These let loose a barrage of highly explosive shells, which tore off the entire front of the Akal Takht, the temporal seat of the Sikhs, setting off fires in many of its internal rooms (some of which housed precious historical relics), and badly damaged its dome.



The damage to the Akal Takht's golden dome

## Eyewitness accounts

The Shiromoni (Temple) Committee secretary **Bhan Singh** was in the temple complex at the time of Operation Bluestar. On the 1st morning of the attack he counted "at least 70 dead bodies" of old men, women and children. Soldiers, commanded by a Major, continued to line up young Sikhs along the hostel's corridor to be shot. When Bhan Singh protested, the Major flew into a rage, tore away his turban and ordered him to either flee the scene or join the "array of martyrs". Bhan Singh "turned back and fled, jumping over the bodies of the dead and injured." Hundreds of young Sikhs, innocent pilgrims from the villages, were killed in this manner.<sup>2</sup>



Sikh pilgrims, once rounded up, had their hands tied by their own turbans by soldiers. Summary executions followed

**Ranbir Kaur**, a women school teacher witnessed the shooting of another group of 150 people whose hands had been tied behind their backs with their own turbans.<sup>3</sup>

A singer at the Golden Temple, **Harcharan Singh Ragi**, his wife and their young daughter came out of their quarters near the information office on the afternoon of June 6. They witnessed the killings of hundreds of people, including women, and would themselves have been shot if a commander had not taken pity on their young daughter who fell at his feet begging him to spare her parents' lives.<sup>4</sup>

Associated Press correspondent **Brahma Chellaney** had managed to dodge the authorities to remain in Amritsar during the Operation Bluestar. Later, he reported that dead bodies were taken in municipal garbage trucks round the clock and burnt in heaps of 20 or more. One attendant at the city's crematorium told him that there was not "enough wood to burn the dead" individually. He also saw "an estimated 50 corpses" in a large garbage lorry which included women & children. He talked to a doctor who had been forced to sign post-mortem reports of some people killed inside the temple. The doctor corroborated the reports that their hands had been tied before the soldiers shot them.<sup>5</sup>

Joyce Pettigrew described the attack '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.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence (1995), Joyce J.M. Pettigrew, p 8.

<sup>2</sup> Operation Bluestar: The Untold Story (1984), Amiya Rao, Aubindo Ghose, Sunil Bhattacharya, Tejinder Ahuja and N. D. Pancholi, p 5.

<sup>3</sup> Reduced to Ashes - The Insurgency and Human Rights in Punjab (2003), Ram Narayan Kumar, Amrik Singh, Ashok Agrwaal and Jaskaran Kaur The Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab, p 38.

<sup>4</sup> Operation Bluestar: The Untold Story (1984), Amiya Rao, Aubindo Ghose, Sunil Bhattacharya, Tejinder Ahuja and N. D. Pancholi, p 13.

<sup>5</sup> The Sikh Struggle, Ram Narayan Kumar & Georg Sieberer (1991), p 265.



*These farmer workers were rounded up after Operation Bluestar. They were never seen again after this photograph was taken*

News of the attack on the Golden Temple quickly spread despite the curfew. Thousands of people in the surrounding villages gathered to march to Amritsar to defend the Golden Temple. At Golwand village in Jhubal, a crowd of several thousands gathered with makeshift weapons under the leadership of Baba Bidhi Chand and began to march the 25km to Amritsar. Helicopter patrols spotted them and strafed them with bullets without warning. Within minutes hundreds were dead and wounded.

Crowds gathered at the villages including Ajnala, Rajash Sunsi, Dhandhesali, Fatehpur, Rajpurtan and Batala in Gurdaspur. A large crowd gathered at Chowk Mehta, HQ of the Damdami Taksal, where the army killed 76 Sikhs and arrested 285. All across the region, wireless sets carried the message from army chiefs to soldiers to shoot on sight anyone on the streets.

The army continued its task of moving through the villages in the countryside & flushing out alleged 'terrorists'. The young Sikh men in the villages were lined up in rows; some were stripped and publicly flogged and accused of being terrorists or withholding information about terrorists. Some were taken away and sent to interrogation centres, never to be seen again.

## Media reports

Mary Anne Weaver's report in the Sunday Times

"Thousands of people have disappeared from the Punjab since the siege of the Sikh's Golden Temple here seven weeks ago. In some villages men between 15-35 have been bound, blindfolded and taken away. Their fate is unknown. Recently in the tiny village of Kaimbala, 300 troops entered the Sikh Temple during prayers, blindfolded the 30 worshippers and pushed them into the streets. According to the priest, Sant Pritpal Singh, the villagers were given electric shocks and interrogated as to the whereabouts of Sikh militants. Gurnam Singh, a 37 year old farmer was held in an army camp for 13 days. Last week, his face bruised and his arms and legs dotted with burns, he said he had been hung upside down and beaten."<sup>6</sup>



*Sikhs interned in camps after Operation Bluestar. Thousands simply disappeared afterwards*

"The army pounding of the Golden Temple area continued over the next few days confirming our fears of deliberate and vindictive destruction. On the night of the 5th, the aged and chronically ill father of the couple next door finally expired and on the morning of the 6th the army gave our neighbours special permission to take him to the crematorium. Even before reaching this site, they could smell the stench of putrid and burning flesh. On entering the crematorium grounds they saw a sight that literally made them sick with horror. Grotesque piles of dozens of bodies were being burnt in the open without dignity or religious rites like so many carcasses. The bodies had all been brought there by dust carts and from the number of carts; the attendant estimated some 3,300 had so far been cremated."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Sunday Times, 22nd June 1984.

## Media reports

The Guardian reported the following: "A Sikh doctor drafted from the Government hospital to Jullunder to conduct post mortem examinations said that he had seen the bodies of two Sikhs who had been shot at point blank range, their hands tied behind their backs with their turbans. His colleagues had reported others, some of whom had been machine-gunned. This doctor headed a team that conducted 400 examinations. He said that most bodies were riddled with bullets and bore bomb wounds. He said, "It was a virtual massacre. A large number of women, children and pilgrims were gunned down."<sup>7</sup>



*Soldiers of the Indian Army interrogating occupants in the circumference of the Golden Temple while the ground is littered with corpses. Notice the corpse being dragged in the background*

According to The Times "The same doctor told journalists that bodies of victims were brought to the mortuary by police in municipal refuse lorries reported that of the 400 bodies, 100 were women and between 15-20 were children under five. One was a two-month-old baby. The doctor said that one "extremist" in the pile of bodies was found to be alive; a soldier shot and killed him."<sup>8</sup>

The Guardian went on to report: "Another police official told reporters that a lorry load of elderly Sikhs, who surrendered on the first day of the military operation, were brought to the main city police station and tortured there by the army. "The soldiers removed their turbans, pulled their hair over their eyes and tied the long hair around their necks. Then they threw sand into their faces. The old man shrieked, but I helplessly watched all this from my office window."<sup>9</sup>

## Amritsar resident's account

One resident of Amritsar gave an eyewitness account to the editor of the Sikh Messenger, a British publication.

"The army pounding of the Golden Temple area continued over the next few days confirming our fears of deliberate and vindictive destruction. On the night of the 5th, the aged and chronically ill father of the couple next door finally expired and on the morning of the 6th the army gave our neighbours special permission to take him to the crematorium. Even before reaching this site, they could smell the stench of putrid and burning flesh. On entering the crematorium grounds they saw a sight that literally made them sick with horror. Grotesque piles of dozens of bodies were being burnt in the open without dignity or religious rites like so many carcasses. The bodies had all been brought there by dust carts and from the number of carts; the attendant estimated some 3,300 had so far been cremated."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The Guardian, 13th June 1984.

<sup>8</sup> The Times, 13th June 1984.

<sup>9</sup> The Guardian, 14th June 1984.

<sup>10</sup> The Sikh Messenger, 1984.

With dead bodies laying all around, the vast lake of the Golden Temple Complex was transformed into a thick red of profuse blood. No attempts were made to provide assistance to the injured or dying. According to the Christian Science Monitor: "On Saturday, medical workers in Amritsar said soldiers had threatened to shoot them if they gave food or water to Sikh pilgrims wounded in the attack and lying in the hospital".<sup>11</sup>

People were killed like that. No medicine was provided, in fact no medical aid was administered at all. Many people died in the camps. Neither water nor medicine aid was provided and you could not even donate blood for the injured in hospitals as it was stated that they were POW's and hence no blood transfusions were permitted. The Army detained volunteers of the Red Cross who wanted to help the injured at the nearby Jallianwala Bagh.<sup>12</sup>

G.K.C Reddy commented that 'Operation Blue Star will go down in history as one of the biggest massacres of unarmed civilians by the organised military force of a nation'. Further, he added that 'the word unarmed is used deliberately as the disparity in arms on the two sides was so great that those resisting army invasion of the temple could hardly be termed armed.'<sup>13</sup>



Pilgrims, including women and children, were 'dragged into the corridors of the Golden Temple and shot'.

Subramaniam Swami published an article soon after the massacre inside the Golden Temple to say that the government had been master-minding a disinformation campaign to create legitimacy for the action. The goal of this disinformation campaign was to 'make out that the Golden Temple was the haven of criminals, a store of armoury and a citadel of the nation's dismemberment conspiracy'<sup>14</sup>

Citizens for Democracy, a respected Indian civil liberties group headed by the distinguished former Supreme Court Judge, V.M. Tarkunde, noted that the actual number of alleged militants was quite small relative to the number of innocent worshippers who had gathered at the Golden Temple to commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev. 'It was indeed a mass massacre mostly of innocents'.<sup>15</sup>

A few months later in September 1984, Mrs. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, a social worker based in Delhi, moved a petition before the Supreme Court to raise some issues about the people the government had detained as the "most dangerous terrorists". The petition demanded the Court's intervention for the release of 22 children aged between two and 16 years, who had been rounded up from the Golden Temple and were being held in the Ludhiana jail. Two judges of the Supreme Court, Chinnappa Reddy and V. Khalid, ruled that "there was no justification for detaining them as they were pilgrims visiting the Golden Temple during Operation Bluestar." At this order, the 22 children lodged at the Ludhiana jail were released. But the police re-arrested most of them and tortured them at various interrogation centres for information on their relatives who had probably been killed during the Army operation.<sup>16</sup>



Aftermath of a peaceful demonstration against Operation Bluestar, New Delhi, 1984

## Media reports

Amrit Wilson of the New Statesman wrote: On 4th June, a day of pilgrims for Sikhs when thousands had gathered at the Golden Temple, army tanks moved into the Temple Complex, smashing into the sanctum and shooting everyone in sight. Those left alive were then prevented from leaving the building, many wounded were left to bleed to death and when they begged for water, Army Jawans told them to drink the mixture of blood and urine on the floor. Some 3,000 dead, including many who were only unconscious, were piled high in trucks and removed. Four months later no list of casualties or missing persons had yet been issued. Then came the army occupation of Punjab with frequent humiliations, arrests and killings of Sikhs by soldiers. It caused a feeling voiced by many ordinary people who had never before been separatist that Sikhs could not be safe there.<sup>17</sup>

In an effort to destroy a crucial part of Sikh heritage, the army deliberately set fire to the Sikh Reference Library within the complex, after it had been secured. Irreplaceable copies of the Guru Granth (book) Sahib, the Sikhs' living guru; archives of documents from every period of Sikh history and even artifacts from the lives of the Gurus were reduced to ash. The Toshakhana, treasure house of the Golden Temple was systematically looted.

The government of India has always maintained that the army action was a 'last resort' necessary to flush out terrorists who had collected weapons. But according to Retired Lt-General S.K. Sinha of the Indian Army: "The Army action was not the 'last resort' as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi would have us believe. It had been in her mind for more than 18 months. Shortly after the Akali agitation of 1982, the Army began rehearsals of a commando raid near Chakrata Cantonment in the Doon Valley, where a complete replica of the Golden Temple complex had been built. Another training involving Aviation Research Centre Commandos, was given in the Sarsawa area and Yamuna bed in helicopters converted into gunships."<sup>18</sup> This was long before any militants had got inside the complex.

H.S. Bhanwar revealed pertinent information regarding the arms that were planted inside the Darbar Sahib. Regarding the issue of arms in the Golden Temple he writes: "A confidential source told me that before President of India, Giani Zail Singh visited Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) on June 8, 1984, the army brought a loaded truck of weapons into the Darbar Sahib complex so that Giani Ji was given the impression that the militants had so many foreign weapons."<sup>19</sup> With this, the Sikhs were defamed and the government had another justification for the army attack. Images of these weapons were broadcast on television showing that the militants inside the complex had weapons.

<sup>11</sup> Christian Science Monitor, 8 June 1984.

<sup>12</sup> The Tragedy of Punjab (1984), Kuldip Nayar & Khushwant Singh, p94.

<sup>13</sup> Army Action in Punjab: Prelude and Aftermath (1984), G.K.C. Reddy, p 49.

<sup>14</sup> Creating a Martyr - Imprint (1984), Subramaniam Swami, p 7.

<sup>15</sup> Oppression in Punjab (1985), Citizens for Democracy, p 76.

<sup>16</sup> Writ on children in Punjab jails (3 April 1985), The Indian Express.

<sup>17</sup> Amrit Wilson : New Statesman, 16th November 1984.

<sup>18</sup> Sant Bhindrawale did not nothing wrong by defending the Golden Temple. Retired Lt-General S.K. Sinha, Spokesman (June 1984) p28-29.

<sup>19</sup> Diary De Panne - Punjabi (May 1999), H.S. Bhanwar, p66.

On October 31 1984, the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards, in revenge for Operation Bluestar. What followed begged belief. Thousands of Sikhs were massacred in the most barbaric method of burning. Encouraged by central government ministers and MPs with the connivance of the police, mobs were assembled to carry out a four day orgy of killings and plunder.



Mobs on the rampage through Sikh neighbourhoods, New Delhi

Early next morning, hordes of people from the suburbs of Delhi were transported to various localities in the city where the Sikh population was concentrated. The mobilisation suggested the backing of an organisation with vast resources. The criminal hordes descending on the city carried crude weapons like iron rods, knives, clubs and combustible material, including kerosene, for arson. They were also supplied with government issued voter and ration lists of houses and business establishments belonging to the Sikhs in various localities.

The government controlled television station Doordarshan, and the All India Radio began broadcasting provocative slogans seeking bloody vengeance, "khoon ka badla khoon se lenge (we will take blood for blood!)".

**"I realised what Jews must have felt like in Nazi Germany. The killing assumed the proportion of a genocide of the Sikh community. For the first time I understood what words like pogrom, holocaust and genocide really meant".**

**"Sikh houses and shops were marked for destruction in much the same way as those of Jews in Tsarist Russia or Nazi Germany."**<sup>20</sup>

Khushwant Singh MP, Indian Parliament

Murderous gangs of 200 or 300 people led by the leaders, with some policemen participating, began to swarm into Sikh houses, hacking the occupants to pieces, chopping off the heads of children, raping women, tying Sikh men to tires set aflame with

kerosene, burning down the houses and shops after ransacking them. Mobs stopped buses and trains, in and out of Delhi, pulling out Sikh passengers to be lynched to death or doused with kerosene and burnt alive.

In some areas, the Sikh families grouped together for self-defence. The police officials then arrived to disperse them, by force when persuasion did not work. In other areas, the police searched the houses for weapons including ceremonial daggers, and confiscated them before the mobs came.



A Sikh man being burnt to death by mobs

## World Press witness carnage

"The bodies beside the track were all Sikh, some had burned alive others burnt to death. The Sikhs were pulled from trains by a Hindu mob outside New Delhi to face a slow death."

Brian James & Stephen Lynas, Daily Mail 3rd November 1984

"Victims speak of mobs led by notoriously unruly Youth Congress activists armed with voters lists from which Sikh homes and businesses could be identified. How did kerosene materialise so efficiently? Why did the police declare open season on Sikh shops?"

Sunday Telegraph, 11th November 1984

"Hardly any soldiers were to be seen in the streets of the capital."

Guardian, 3rd November 1984

"Days of violence and loot and murder left the national capital dazed - an unprecedented holocaust. Criminally led hoodlum killed Sikhs, looted or burnt homes and properties while the police twiddled their thumbs."

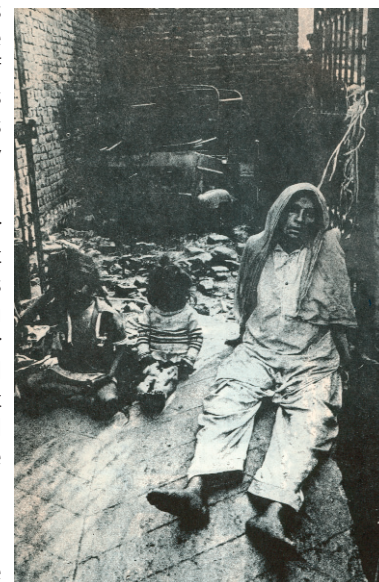
India Today 15th November 1984

"Many people complained that, in some cases, the police were not merely hanging back, but giving active support."

The Times, 5th November 1984

The Delhi pogrom has been documented by several organisations. The People's Union for Civil Liberties and the People's Union of Democratic Rights published a joint report, called Who are the Guilty? The report says that "the attacks on the members of the Sikh community in Delhi... far from being spontaneous expressions of 'madness' and of 'grief and anger' at Mrs. Gandhi's assassination, as made out by the authorities, were the outcome of a well organised plan marked by acts of both deliberate commission and omission by important politicians of the Congress and by authorities in the administration..." The report mentions the names of 16 important Congress politicians, 13 police officers and 198 others, accused by survivors and eye-witnesses.<sup>21</sup>

The report by the Citizens for Democracy concluded that the "carnage was orchestrated by the ruling party".<sup>22</sup> Yet another investigative report compiled by a team of prominent citizens including retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, S. M. Sikri, former civil servants Badruddin Tyabji, Rajeshwar Dayal and others, came to the same conclusions.<sup>23</sup>



Widow and orphans, aftermath of the pogroms

<sup>20</sup> My Bleeding Punjab (1992), Khushwant Singh, p 93.

<sup>21</sup> Who are the Guilty? (1984), People's Union for Democratic Rights and People's Union for Civil Liberties - 31 October to 4 November 1984.

<sup>22</sup> Truth about Delhi Violence - Citizens' Commission (1985), Citizens for Democracy.

<sup>23</sup> Harvinder Singh Phoolka, Senior Advocate New Delhi has pulled together all the affidavits and police statements resulting from the carnage as well as the various reports and commissions over the last 20 years, into one historical record. See: carnage84.com

The meticulousness with which the massacres were organised bespeaks of a definite plan, surfacing repeatedly in Saket, Bhogal, Jangpura, Ashram in South Delhi before spreading to the trans-Jamuna colonies, the resettlement colonies in West Delhi and other areas in the northern parts of the city. The pattern of killing was repeated in areas like Sultanpuri and Mangolpuri, as were the numbers killed. First the police sealed off the areas, then Congress-I party workers and leaders led mobs, armed with voters lists, began their putsch. One family alone in Palam Village has 21 widows.

Numerous women were gang raped in these areas after the men and infant boys had been killed. One such case was referred from the Shahdara Mental Hospital to JP Hospital – a young girl who had no clue to her identity, so brutally has she been ravished. Many cases went unreported as the women concerned wanted their shame to remain buried with the cinders of their homes.

But the violence wasn't just confined to Delhi, but spread throughout India. Sikhs were killed in Uttar Pradesh, mostly in cities like Kanpur, where the administration there let things take their course for a day or so before imposing curfew. The steel town of Bokaro bore the brunt of the violence in Bihar. In Madhya Pradesh, the violence was spread over nearly 40 towns including Indore, Bhopal, Jabalpur, Ujjain, Raipur, Gwalior, Raigarh, Mahendergarh and Bina. Similar outbreaks of violence broke out in Haryana, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat.



Police look on while Sikh homes burn

## Trilokpuri massacre, East Delhi

**Rahul Kuldip Bedi and Joseph Maliakan of the Indian Express** were the first newspaper reporters to enter Trilokpuri on 2 November. This is what they reported:

"Shortly after sunset on 1 November, the mob, busy in Block 32, Trilokpuri, East Delhi, dispersed for dinner. It had built up an appetite. Killing, burning and pillaging the 400-odd Sikh families in the Block had, indeed left them hungry. An hour later, their bellies full, they casually strolled back, to the two narrow lanes in the trans-Jamuna resettlement colony, forcibly plunged into darkness; to join those already hard at work."

"Labouring at a leisurely pace they split open Lachman Singh's skull and pouring kerosene into the gash set alight the half-alive man in front of Gyan Devi, his wife. Balwant Singh, who tried to escape after shaving himself, had his eyes gouged out before he too was similarly burnt. Sarb Singh, his terror-stricken father-in-law, watched. The sport continued, interspersed with solicitous visits from the local police to ensure that things were going well."

"The calculated carnage in Delhi and over 80 towns in the country had begun. The pattern was similar all over, the brutality unbelievable and barbaric, the tragedy unspeakable. On 1 November, all exit points from Trilokpuri have been sealed off by massive concrete pipes. Conscientious men from the colony, armed with lathis, guarded the pipes, barely a kilometre from two police stations – Patparganj and Kalyanpuri – to ensure that no Sikh escapes. Also, that no one except the police set foot into Trilokpuri."

"Around 2 O'clock on 2 November, we enter Trilokpuri. Just about the time that the killers, having toiled for 30 long and uninterrupted hours, were scouring Block 32 for booty or any young Sikh that inadvertently, they may, have overlooked. As if, around 350 Sikhs already killed and an equal number of looted and burnt houses was not enough. A plume of smoke spirals upwards from half-charred bodies. Two lanes of Block 32, an area of around 500 square yards inhabited by around 450 Sikh families, is littered with corpses, the drains choked with dismembered limbs and masses of hair. Cindered human remains lie scattered in the first 20 yards of the first lane. The remaining 40-yard stretch of the street is strewn with naked bodies, brutally hacked beyond recognition. Lifeless arms hang over balconies; many houses have bodies piled three-deep on their doorsteps. 'Take me away', wails a three-year old girl, crawling from under the bodies of her father and three brothers and stepping over countless others lying in her one-roomed tenement, collapsing into the arms of a reporter."<sup>25</sup>

From 10 November, the government – anxious to proclaim that 'normalcy has been restored' – with unimaginable callousness started to forcibly close the refugee camps, to forcibly send the refugees back to the colonies from which they had fled, in which they had seen their relatives being hacked and burnt just a week earlier, in which their houses were nothing now but burnt-out empty shells, in which the very gundas and policemen they had seen loot, burn and kill roamed freely. Their heart-rending pleas that they should not be thrown back to the mercies of these persons, that they should not be sent back till their colonies had been made secure, till their houses had been made habitable proved of no avail. They were given 50 rupees (less than £1) a piece plus some dry rations and herded into buses. Where on their return they huddled together in a park, as in Sultanpuri, they were forcibly dispersed.<sup>26</sup>

### Nicholas Nugent of the BBC's account

"Particular targets of the mobs were the many taxis driven by Sikhs. More than two thousand cars, taxis and trucks were burnt during the three-day orgy of vengeance and violence. The initial 'knee-jerk' response had given way to what appeared to be a more systematic and organised outbreak of blood-letting. Sikhs were stabbed, burned and butchered to death. Sikh taxi drivers were pulled from their vehicles and killed, their bodies left on the road. A well-organised group spent several hours putting to death all identifiable Sikhs living in the suburb of Trilokpuri.

While the bloodbath continued, Delhi's police and civil administration were preoccupied with maintaining security in the more visible parts of the city in preparation for the scores of foreign VIPs who were arriving for Mrs Gandhi's funeral. Delhi police gave a higher priority to keeping the streets clear for the visiting dignitaries than to stopping the killings. Nobody, it seemed, had orders to seek out and try to prevent the holocaust that was taking place.

Rajiv Gandhi seemed to be preoccupied with organising the funeral rites of his mother, and receiving the visiting dignitaries. During the election campaign which was to follow the assassination, Sikhs were portrayed as an alien community, as if all of them were being blamed for Indira Gandhi's death.

Five years later, many Sikhs were still living in refugee camps around the capital and several thousand others had migrated across north India to Punjab in search of greater security."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Rajiv Gandhi – Son of a Dynasty, (1990), Nicholas Nugent, p25-27.

<sup>25</sup> Politics of a Pogrom, quoted in The Assassination & After (1985), Rahul Kuldip Bedi, p51.

<sup>26</sup> Them v Us, quoted in The Assassination & After (1985), Arun Shourie, p85.

## Eyewitness - Amitav Ghosh

'It was still and quiet, eerily so. The usual sounds of rush-hour traffic were absent. But every so often we heard a speeding car or a motorcycle on the main street. Later, we discovered that these mysterious speeding vehicles were instrumental in directing the carnage that was taking place. Protected by certain politicians, "organisers" were zooming around the city, assembling the mobs and transporting them to Sikh-owned houses and shops.'

'Apparently, the transportation was provided free. A civil-rights report published shortly afterward stated that this phase of violence "began with the arrival of groups of armed people in tempo vans, scooter, motorcycles or trucks," and went on to say.'



Mobs dragged Sikhs from buses, beat them and then burnt them alive

'With cans of petrol they went around the localities and systematically set fire to Sikh-houses, shops and Gurdwaras...the targets were primarily young Sikhs. They were dragged out, beaten up and then burned alive...In all the affected spots, a calculated attempt to terrorise the people was

evident in the common tendency among the assailants to burn alive Sikhs on public roads. Fire was everywhere; it was the day's motif. Throughout the city, Sikh houses were being looted and then set on fire, often with their occupants still inside.'

'A survivor – a woman who lost her husband and three sons – offered the following account to Veena Das, a Delhi sociologist: Some people, neighbours, said it would be better if we hid in an abandoned house nearby. So my husband took our three sons and hid there. We locked the house from outside, but there was treachery in people's hearts. Someone must have told the crowd. They baited him to come out. Then they poured kerosene on that house. They burnt them alive. When I went there that night, the bodies of my sons were on the loft – huddled together.'

'Over the next few days, thousands of people died in Delhi alone. Thousands more died in other cities. The total death toll will never be known. The dead were overwhelmingly Sikh men. Entire neighbourhoods were gutted; tens of thousands of people were left homeless.'<sup>27</sup>

### Case 1

This widow, a former resident of Kartarnagar (trans-Yamuna area), related that their house was looted and burnt by a mob on 2 November 1984. Her husband and two sons, one married only four months ago, were dragged out of the house and mercilessly beaten. Thereafter, kerosene was poured over the three men and they were set alight. No police or army was in evidence at the time. She could, she said, identify the person who killed her husband. Though she did not know his name, she was definite about the name of his father: a weaver of the area. She had originally come from Rawalpindi at the time of Partition. This was her second nightmarish experience of mob fury during which she had lost everything, including three male members of her family. She was accompanied by a completely dazed girl, hardly 16 years old, widow of her recently-married and recently-butchered son. This young girl sat through her mother-in-law's harrowing testimony shedding silent tears of grief and despair.

<sup>27</sup>The Ghost of Indira Gandhi (1995), Amitav Ghosh, Professor at Queens College, New York.



Aftermath of a massacre, Trilokpuri, East Delhi

### Case 2

A woman from Trilokpuri described her harrowing experience. She and her husband, originally from Sind, had migrated to Rajasthan in 1947. About fifteen years ago they had moved to Delhi in search of better prospects. During the slum clearance drive of 1974-75, they had been resettled in Trilokpuri.

She and her husband and three of their children survive but the eldest son aged 18 was killed on 1 November. She described the mob led by the Congress-I block pradhan as consisting of some people from the same block and others from neighbouring blocks and nearby villages. While the block pradhan identified Sikh houses and urged the mobs to loot, burn and kill, the women were herded together into one room. Some of them ran away but were pursued to the nearby nallah where they were raped. Their shrieks and cries for help fell on deaf ears. From among the women held in the room, the hoodlums asked each other to select whosoever they chose. All the women were stripped and many dishonoured. 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.

### Case 3

On November 1, Gurdip Kaur, her three sons and her husband were at home. Here is how she described the attack. 'Three of the men ran out and were set on fire. My youngest son stayed in the house with me. But they came into the house. Those young boys, 14 and 16 year olds, began to drag my son out even though he was hiding behind me. They tore my clothes and stripped me naked in front of my son. They raped me right there, in front of my son, in my own house. They were young boys, maybe eight of them.'



One of the many thousands of widows and orphans of the November 1984 massacres

After they had taken my honour, they left. I took my son to sit among the women but they came and dragged him away. They took him to the street corner, hit him with lathis, sprinkled kerosene over him, and burnt him alive. I tried to save him but they struck me with knives and broke my arm. At that time I was completely naked. I had managed to get a hold of an old sheet, which I had wrapped around myself. If I had even one piece of clothing on my body, I would have gone and thrown myself over my son and tried to save him. I would have done anything to save at least one young man of my family. Not one of the four is left.'<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup>We Share Their Agony - Sikh Women Victims of November 1984, Manushi magazine.



Following Operation Bluestar, the government commenced a sweeping crackdown on Sikhs across Punjab under the code name 'Operation Woodrose'. The Indian army rampaged through Punjab's villages and towns. Sikh males, particularly young, were rounded up and taken away. Anyone who was a Sikh was subject to suspicious attention and harassment. Amritdhari (baptised) Sikhs were particular targets as the following Indian Army publication illustrates:

**'Any knowledge of the 'Amritdharis' (baptised Sikhs) who are dangerous people and pledged to commit murders, arson and acts of terrorism should immediately be brought to the notice of the authorities. These people may appear harmless from outside but they are basically committed to terrorism. In the interest of all of us their identity and whereabouts must always be disclosed.'**<sup>29</sup>

These instructions constituted unmistakably clear orders by the government of India for large scale massacres of all visible Sikhs.



*Sikhs were routinely stopped and searched, even when entering their places of worship*

India prides itself as the world's largest democracy, but in the state of Punjab, democracy was curtailed in order to suppress a people. From 1984 onwards, rule from Delhi was imposed repeatedly and elections cancelled. The following draconian measures were imposed on the people of Punjab.

The Terrorism & Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act allowed for the detention of a person on mere suspicion. Special courts were held in secret by executive magistrates who were appointed centrally. Tens of thousands of Sikhs were detained, tortured and disappeared. Only 1% of people were ever convicted of a crime under the act. Retired Supreme Court Justice Krishna Iyer noted that 'Justice in Punjab had been crucified on the cross of the law'.<sup>30</sup>

Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code allowed a person to be presumed guilty if she were found at the scene of a crime and to be held without charge for a year. The state could close down a newspaper or seize a book or any other material considered prejudicial to national integration. Under the National Security Act an individual could be preventively detained for a year if judged to be likely to behave in a manner inimical to the interests of the country.<sup>31</sup> Human right activists, lawyers, teachers and journalists were also targeted, harassed, detained and even murdered.

In consequence Ram Singh Biling, a newspaper reporter and secretary of the Punjab Human Rights Organisation "was picked up and unceremoniously executed." Then Justice Ajit Singh Bains, chairman of PHRO and retired judge of the High Court was illegally arrested, handcuffed and humiliated in April 1992. The 70-year old heart patient, admired for his integrity and independence, was held without trial for weeks, and only released after the Bar Association of India, at the urging of Fali Nariman, the Bar Association of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, and the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists protested at his arrest. Jagwinder Singh, a human rights lawyer, was picked up on September 25, 1992. "Although the chief minister and the chief secretary promised to intervene, Jagwinder Singh never returned".

## Case study – Pragat Singh

Sixty-five-year-old Baldev Singh from Amritsar had retired from the 9<sup>th</sup> Punjab Regiment of the Indian Army after suffering serious injuries during the war with Pakistan in 1965, which he fought at Poonch sector in Jammu and Kashmir. Baldev Singh's eldest daughter Manjit Kaur had been India's star female weight-lifter, earning 19 gold medals. She had also represented India in many international events, including the Asian Games held in Beijing. His youngest son, 25-year-old Pragat Singh, earned his livelihood by running a dairy farm. The police began to harass him, picking him up for interrogation and torturing him in illegal custody.



*A police truck filled with the corpses of Sikh youth, 1993*

Unable to put up with the harassment, Pragat Singh ran away from home but was arrested on 19 September 1990 while he was watching a film along with his cousin Chayan Singh at Sandhu Talkies, a cinema hall in Amritsar. On 5 November 1992, newspapers reported Pragat Singh's death in

a supposed armed encounter with the police near Raja Sansi, a suburb of Amritsar. Baldev Singh spoke to an employee at the General Hospital in Amritsar where the postmortem of the body had been conducted. The employee's description of the body matched Pragat Singh's. Baldev Singh reached Durgiyana Mandir cremation ground just as the police lit the pyre. The head was already burning, but the rest of the body was still intact. Although Baldev Singh was allowed to carry the ashes for the last rites, the abduction and the illegal cremation of Pragat Singh remained officially unacknowledged. Baldev Singh's affidavit also said that his daughter Manjit Kaur was so traumatised by the incident that she decided never again to represent India in any competitive sport.<sup>32</sup>

The right to life of citizens is at the heart of India's Constitution Article 21. But in 1988, the Indian Parliament passed a 59th Amendment which enabled the suspension of Article 21 on the grounds of 'internal disturbances'. Punjab was then declared a 'Disturbed Area' under the Disturbed Areas Act of 1991. This astonishing move meant that India was legally suspending protection of the right to life against arbitrary violation in the state where the majority of Sikhs lived.

Punjab became a police state far exceeding what George Orwell envisaged in his book, named chillingly 1984. After 1987 the army and security forces' death squads penetrated into the heart of many rural homes in search of the young. Third degree methods were employed by the police.

The UK-based Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture documented Sikh torture victims who had fled India.<sup>33</sup> The methods used by the security forces in torturing Sikhs were barbaric to say the least. The rape of women began to be used systematically as a form of torture.

<sup>29</sup> Baat Cheet Serial No. 153 (July 1984), Department of Defence, Government of India.

<sup>30</sup> Seige of the Sikhs - Violations of Human Rights in Punjab (1988), Ajit Singh Bains, p 27.

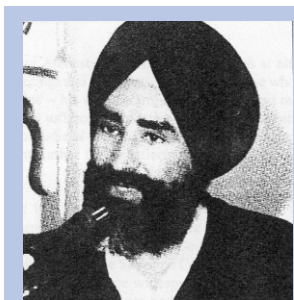
<sup>31</sup> This legalised the detention of a person on mere suspicion of 'terrorism'. According to Amnesty International, the term 'terrorist' or 'extremist' in India is "so broadly defined that it may include people who non-violently express their political opinions". Amnesty International, Death Penalty Report, 25th April 1990.

<sup>32</sup> Reduced to Ashes - The Insurgency and Human Rights in Punjab (2003), Ram Narayan Kumar, Amrik Singh, Ashok Agrwaal and Jaskaran Kaur The Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab, p 6.

<sup>33</sup> Lives Under Threat - Sikhs coming to the UK from Punjab (1999), Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture.

# Mass Cremations

If one was in any doubt about the extent of the genocide, the following episode put that doubt to rest. Human rights activist, Jaswant Singh Khalra, set about uncovering a dark secret in the



Jaswant Singh Khalra came from a family of freedom fighters. His grandfather, Harman Singh, was a passenger on the infamous Komagata Maru ship in 1914, and spent most of his life either in prison or away from his home fighting for Indian independence. Khalra's father, Kartar Singh, was an active member of the Indian National Congress before independence.

Punjab. He discovered that missing Sikhs in their thousands had been executed without trial by police and security forces and that most of the bodies had been secretly disposed of through mass cremations. Just by examining three of these cremation grounds, Durgiana Mandir, Patti and Tarn Taran, records showed that police cremated three thousand bodies. It is generally believed that there were a total of fifty such cremation grounds used by police across Punjab. Justice Kuldeep Singh and Justice Saghir Ahmed, when faced with evidence collected by the Criminal Bureau of Investigation Inquiry expressed 'horror and shock' and described the mass cremations as 'worse than genocide'.

Khalra's incisive and damning investigative work, provoked a vicious reaction from the police. On 6th September 1995, following an international tour to expose the human rights atrocities in Punjab, he was suddenly abducted by the police and never seen alive again. He had previously been warned by the police that if he persisted, "he too would become one of those missing names". The findings of a subsequent inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation on the issue of illegal cremations have been kept secret by the Indian government. Amnesty International has long expressed its serious concern about the sinister 'disappearance' of Jaswant Singh Khalra<sup>34</sup>. On 18 Nov, 2005, six mid-level police officers were convicted of Khalra's murder but police chief, KPS Gill went unpunished even though during the trial it emerged he had interrogated Khalra<sup>34</sup>.

## Case study – Satwinder Kaur and Sarabjit Kaur

Police officer-in-charge of a post at village Bham, in Batala subdivision of Gurdaspur district, kidnapped two teenage girls, Satwinder Kaur and Sarabjit Kaur, in front of eyewitnesses in his official jeep. The officer-in-charge of the police station in Har-Gobindpur denied their custody. Four days later their naked dismembered bodies were recovered from a nearby canal. Officers of Har-Gobindpur police station tried to pressurise the parents to sign a declaration that the bodies were unidentified and unclaimed, and were threatened that they would be eliminated... if they disobeyed.<sup>35</sup>

Many bodies were dumped in the rivers and canals of the Punjab and neighbouring states. The Rajasthan state government went on record in complaining to the then Chief Secretary of Punjab about the large number of bodies being carried into their state through the canals. Eyewitnesses often spoke of bodies of young men with hands tied behind their backs. Similarly in 1988, when serious floods struck the Punjab, bodies were washed into neighbouring Pakistan. Radio Pakistan referred to 1,700 bodies being carried by the flood waters coming from India.

## Case study – Gurdev Kaur and Gurmeet Kaur

On the afternoon of 21 August 1989, a party of Batala Police (one was in uniform, five others were in plain clothes) picked up Gurdev Kaur and Gurmeet Kaur, both employees of the Prabhat Financial Corporation, from their offices opposite Khalsa College, Amritsar. Many bystanders witnessed the arrest. The women were pushed into the vehicle and whisked away to Batala, another district altogether. There they were taken to a makeshift interrogation centre which had been set up in the abandoned factory premises of Beiko Industries. It was 6pm. Gurdev Kaur watched Senior Superintendent of Police Gobind Ram beat a Sikh youth with an iron rod then he suddenly turned and struck her with the rod across the stomach. He rained blows on her stomach until she began to bleed through her vagina. Then Gurmeet Kaur was beaten in the same way. Gurdev fainted but was revived and beaten again. The two women were taken to the Batala Sadar police station at about 11.30pm. Next morning she they were taken to the Beiko factory again. Their limbs were massaged then followed by further beating. With their legs crippled by rollers, they were molested and threatened with death.<sup>36</sup>

It was after these kinds of cases that even the governor of Punjab, S.S. Ray, admitted that the police had become 'sadistic'.

A reign of violence, repression and genocide was to persist until at least 1995. Amnesty International noted that : "thousands of suspected members and supporters of Sikh opposition groups

The Guardian newspaper's India correspondent, Derek Brown, observing this pitiable state, wrote of the "long-suffering people of Punjab from which order, official morality, and justice have fled."

Guardian, London, 29th April 1991.

advocating the creation of a separate Sikh state (Khalistan) in Punjab have been arrested by the Indian security forces and detained under special legislation suspending normal legal safeguards. In many cases the arrest of the detainees has

remained unacknowledged for weeks or months, and there have been numerous reports of torture during interrogation. Scores of those arrested have been tortured to death or have otherwise been deliberately and unlawfully killed in custody (although official reports sometimes say they have died in "encounters" with the police or while "trying to escape"), while others have simply "disappeared", the security forces refusing to acknowledge that they had ever been arrested<sup>37</sup>

"In India, there is a substantive body of evidence that government and official agencies have made special efforts to cover-up human rights violations and prevent the police and security forces from being punished. Torture is routine in every one of India's twenty five states. Every day in police cells and military barracks throughout the land, pain and indignity are deliberately inflicted by the paid agents of the state. On men, women and even children. They are beaten senseless, given electric shocks or have their limbs crushed by heavy rollers. Sexual torture, including rape is common..."

Amnesty International: India: Torture, Rape & Death in Custody, 1992

<sup>34</sup> A Mockery of Justice - The case concerning the 'disappearance' of human rights defender Jaswant Singh Khalra severely undermined (1998), Amnesty International. See also [www.ensaaf.org/khalra.html](http://www.ensaaf.org/khalra.html) for details of the 2005 trial.

<sup>35</sup> It's Never too late to uncover the Truth, (2000), Sikh Review, Patwant Singh.

<sup>36</sup> The Sikhs (1999), Patwant Singh, p 246.

<sup>37</sup> Wrongful Detention of Asylum-Seeker Raghbir Singh (February 1996), Amnesty International.

# The dehumanisation of the Sikhs

The question arises, how did all this take place without any international outcry? The answer partly lies in the organised manner in which Sikhs were stigmatised as 'fanatical terrorists', similar to the stigmatisation of 'greedy, exploiting, unpatriotic' Jews in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Sikhs were commonly labelled anti-national and terrorists, especially if they raised any voice against their treatment and questioned the validity of Indian rule.

After Operation Bluestar, the government controlled TV service, Doordarshan, ran a series of programmes to justify the attack on the Golden Temple.<sup>38</sup> Allegations of drugs use and prostitution was also mentioned while describing the activities of the occupants. Attacks on the Sikh religion now became fair game. Those responsible for this propoganda were later to be implicated in the November massacres.<sup>39</sup>

During the December 1984 parliamentary elections, huge posters went up around India showing Sikhs brandishing automatic weapons over a bullet-ridden body of the former Prime Minister and asking voters to unite against this menace. One other factor in preventing the truth to come out was the denial of access to bodies like Amnesty International and UN Human Rights Rapporteurs to the Punjab.

**"The Delhi violence was well planned and well organised. It would have burst forth even if Indira Gandhi had been alive".**

**Economic and Political Weekly  
8 December 1984.**



*Sikh prisoner, turbanless, being abused by Central Reserve Police, Punjab, 1984*



*Indian police and their latest victim in the killing fields of Punjab*

Amiya Rao wrote: 'The new Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in his maiden speech on Delhi's boat-club lawns did not have a word to condemn the killings nor did he give any assurance to the Sikhs that the killers would be punished; instead, he merely used certain ugly words such as 'avenge', 'anger', 'revenge' and explained away this unprecedented orgy of violence comparing it with a natural phenomenon: "there is a shaking of the earth, whenever a big tree falls" – even then it was not clear who the 'big tree' was, Indira Gandhi or the thousands of Sikhs who had been felled and still more vague is the shaking of the earth, could it mean that the PM had put his seal of approval to what had happened?'



*The consequence of police raj in the Punjab*

Amiya Rao went on to say: 'people in Shivaji Park, a middle-class colony in East Delhi, told me that long before October 31, for weeks they would hear a voice, at midnight calling on the Hindus "wake up, to arise and destroy" (utho, jago, maro). The eerie voice had in the stillness of the night a terrific impact and they would shrink in fear. So the preparation had begun; and when one remembers the involvement of Cabinet Ministers in the recent violence one can draw one's own conclusion. Many have told me that Indira Gandhi's assassination had merely advanced the date of violence.'<sup>40</sup>

**"We shall kill all these Sikh bastards"**

*Indian police official quoted in the  
Guardian, 6th December 1986*

## Case study – Balvinder Singh's family

On 30 August 1991, three unnumbered police jeeps carrying eight or nine men each went to Jatana village in Ropar district, Punjab. On the pretext of arresting Balvinder Singh, they killed his 95-year old grandmother, his maternal aunt, her teenage daughter and his polio-affected infant cousin. The police then set the bodies on fire and departed.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Amritsar - Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle (1995), Mark Tully & Satish Jacob, p208.

<sup>39</sup> 1984 Carnage in Delhi - A report on the Aftermath (1992), People's Union for Democratic Rights, p12.

<sup>40</sup> When Delhi Burnt (8 December 1984), Economic and Political Weekly, Amiya Rao.

<sup>41</sup> The Sikhs (1999), Patwant Singh, p 245.

# Police vigilante groups

With tensions heightened after Operation Bluestar, the massacres in November and the oppression in the Punjab, the Sikh independence movement began to gain strength. Sikhs en-masse began to feel that they could only be safe in a separate homeland, free from religious intolerance, massacres and police brutality. According to Joyce Pettigrew 'it was the police treatment of civilians that had driven the population to support the guerrillas'.<sup>42</sup>

In response, the Indian authorities went into an all-out war against the people of Punjab, militant or not. They also went one step further in order that the cries of the Sikhs remained unheard, especially to the outside world.

In a landmark investigative report published in 2003, 'Reduced to Ashes - The Insurgency and Human Rights in Punjab', Ram Narayan Kumar notes: 'My own research on Punjab in that period suggested that the state agencies were creating vigilante outfits in order to infiltrate the Sikh radical movement and generate a climate of moral revulsion by engineering heinous crimes which they then attributed to armed Sikh groups'.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout the 80's and 90's, the Punjab police carried out clandestine operations, including orchestration of sensational terrorist crimes, to manipulate public opinion in favour of repressive measures at home and to undermine international attention on reports of human right abuses in Punjab.



Sikh youth bore the brunt of the killings

Dhiren Bhagat of the Indian Post reported on custom officers at New Delhi airport intercepting a consignment of arms, including rocket launchers and ammunition on an Indian Airlines flight from Kabul. Sometime later, the arms were used by so-called militants in the Punjab. The Indian media

sensationally reported the use of rocket launchers and this helped the government rush through emergency powers in the Punjab curtailing life and liberty rights. Dhiren Bhagat's story suggested that the rockets had been fired by the government-sponsored agent provocateurs with the intention of whipping up anti-Sikh hysteria in the country".<sup>44</sup> Bhagat was killed under suspicious circumstances shortly after his article was published.

A Canadian newspaper, the Globe and Mail, carried an investigation report claiming that Indian government agents were responsible for the bombing of an Air India jet in June 1985 that killed 329 people aboard (2 Sikhs were arrested and charged for the crime, but were acquitted in 2005). The objective of the bombing was to discredit the separatist movement in Punjab as a terrorist movement, and to destroy the basis of sympathy for its protagonists in the western countries.<sup>45</sup>

As Joyce Pettigrew observed: 'The consensus view, from a wide range of people to whom I talked, was that the strategy of these massacres and killings were planned elsewhere. It was also a general view that they were carried out with a view to discrediting groups that appeared to have roots among the population'.<sup>46</sup> There is also evidence to show that people who committed crimes attributed to militant separatist were putting on the Sikh attire including the turban, to give the Sikhs a bad image.<sup>47</sup>

Commentating on the militant groups active in the Punjab, Patwant Singh noted 'Resistance movements the world over have crossed acceptable boundaries in fighting for their rights and ideals, and Sikh militancy was no exception. Limits were crossed, criminals infiltrated the movement, innocents were killed, and extortionists had their day. The brutality of the train and bus bombings – carried out by government vigilantes as well, to discredit Sikh militants – were reprehensible and in no way less bestial than extreme police behaviour. But everyday crime was also attributed to the Sikhs – as if the state were free of all crime except for the criminal activities of 'terrorists'!<sup>48</sup>



Mass 'bhogs' (funeral ceremonies) in Punjabi villages became common place during the 1990s as killings by the police and army reached epidemic levels

In his book, Julio Ribeiro, who was police chief of Punjab during the period, writes about the undercover operations with an extraordinary candor: "In Punjab there were some persons with criminal propensities, who were known to police officers at various levels. They were approached and a few of them agreed to form groups which would move in the guise of terrorists and confront the real militants in their dens... The police did give them financial and logistical support, but their demands grew to an extent where it was impossible to satisfy them within our resources. Besides, they were very greedy people, with a criminal tendency, who began to prey on law-abiding, rich citizens on the assumption that the police were indebted to them and so would do nothing to stop them."<sup>49</sup> Successive governments manipulated the media to attribute all crimes to separatist militants. This generated a public reaction, helpful in denying justice to the Sikhs.

Human rights activists of the The Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab secretly taped the following conversation with a Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) about what used to happen in the days before the SSP's periodic meetings with Director General of Police K.P.S. Gill: "You can check that up! Before such a meeting with K.P.S. Gill, 300 to 400 Sikhs used to die in Punjab. Every SSP had to report: I have killed 14. The other who said I have killed 28 was appreciated more. The third SSP who had to outsmart the first two had to report 31. The night before the meeting with Gill, the Sikhs used to die so that the SSPs could vie with each other in showing their anti-terrorist achievements."<sup>50</sup>



A victim of a 'fake encounter' - a euphemism for an extra judicial killing

<sup>42</sup> The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence (1995), Joyce J.M. Pettigrew, p 114.

<sup>43</sup> Reduced to Ashes - The Insurgency and Human Rights in Punjab (2003), Ram Narayan Kumar, Amrik Singh, Ashok Agrwaal and Jaskaran Kaur The Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab, p104.

<sup>44</sup> Rajiv's spies smuggle arms (24 April 1988) The Observer.

<sup>45</sup> Soft Target (1999), Brian McAndrew, Toronto Star and Zuhair Kashmeri, Toronto Globe and Mail.

<sup>46</sup> The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence (1995), Joyce J.M. Pettigrew, p 123.

<sup>47</sup> 'Current' (Aug 5-11 1987 issue) reported a camp 'somewhere in the Amritsar district where the All-India Hindu Shiv Sena was training about 1,000 of its young followers in use of arms. The boys let their hair and beards grow and assumed the appearance of Sikh youth. The Sena president, Surinder Billa, managed the camp and told the reporter that the idea was that these young men would act as agents provocateurs amongst the Sikh groups. Similar camps had been set up in nine other places.' Quoted in Politics of Genocide, Jaijee (1995) p219.

<sup>48</sup> The Sikhs (1999), Patwant Singh, p 246.

<sup>49</sup> Bullet for Bullet: My Life as a Police Officer (1998), Julio Ribeiro.

<sup>50</sup> Reduced to Ashes - The Insurgency and Human Rights in Punjab (2003), Ram Narayan Kumar, Amrik Singh, Ashok Agrwaal and Jaskaran Kaur The Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab, p107.

For Sikhs, 1984 heralded a nightmare that was to last for more than a decade and its effects are still being felt in present day Punjab. Amnesty International's 2003 report has revealed that torture and other forms of human rights violations are still widespread. It is also alarmed that a blanket amnesty had been declared for police officers preventing them from being prosecuted for human rights violations. A move supported by both the government and opposition parties.<sup>51</sup> According to the US State Department, during the early part of the 1990s, 60,000 awards were given to police officers for killing both 'listed' and 'unlisted' militants. Bounty killing had become big business.

*"the mood in India 'bore an ominous resemblance to that of the 1930's Germany, likening the orchestrated urban pogroms against Sikhs and Muslims' to so many Kristallnachts.'*

*Paul Brass, Political Scientist*

One of the most alarming developments in the state of Punjab was the way in which victims and their families of human rights abuses were routinely harassed if they sought redress from the courts. There have been cases of even lawyers representing the victims families being targeted to the extent of them dropping cases as Jaskaran Kaur's investigation revealed.<sup>52</sup>

Since the murderous carnage of November 1984, thousands of Sikh widows and orphaned families, remain stuck in refugee camps, homeless, without justice, and meeking out a miserable existence.

Members of parliament and police officers who had been accused as organisers of the carnage, rather than being brought to justice, were promoted to higher office. Party tickets were handed out by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to members of his party who had been named by the victims as organisers of the carnage. "progress towards indicting anyone for the post-assassination killings was notoriously slow". By 1990, one murder case out of an estimated 3,870 alone in Delhi, has been cleared up.<sup>53</sup>

A series of Commissions of Inquiries over the last 23 years have simply got the Congress Party, Delhi administration and police off the hook. The Nanavati Report, released in August 2005 being the latest. Yet again, it exonerated the majority of perpetrators from the Congress Party and Delhi police. To date, the organisers of the massacres continue to be protected by the Indian state despite damning evidence in their roles in mass murder. For the many who were so cruelly widowed or orphaned, the last 23 years have been unbearable.

### According to Human Rights Watch 2003 report:

"Six years ago, the Indian Supreme Court directed the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to investigate 2,097 cases of illegal cremation in Punjab's Amritsar district. The NHRC has yet to hear testimony in a single case. Between 1984 and 1994, thousands of persons "disappeared" and were believed illegally cremated in Punjab as part of a brutal police crackdown to quash insurgency. Police counter-insurgency efforts included torture, forced disappearances, and a bounty system of cash rewards for the summary execution of suspected Sikh militant. By early 1993, the government claimed normalcy had returned to the state. Police abuses continued, however, and there was no effort to account for hundreds of forced disappearances and summary killings."<sup>54</sup>

India since independence has enjoyed an inexplicable immunity from international censure, as Barbara Crossette notes. The images of Gandhian pacifism and Eastern mysticism cover up a multitude of abuses, not only vis-à-vis the outside but within India as well, where a huge media apparatus functions to keep people largely in the dark about the level of popular disaffection and the erosions of democracy that are both on the increase. She notes that more Indians fall victim to their own army and police each year than were killed during the entire seventeen-year dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile! Despite this appalling level of state violence, there have been no mass protests in India and there is no significant international outcry. The 'mantra' of democracy, as Crossette dubs it, overwhelms all dissenting voices.<sup>56</sup>

Paul Brass, writing in the prestigious New Cambridge History of India series, comments that 'it is past time to note that Indian politics and society display many of the symptoms of a murderous pre-fascist state which has already produced a multiplicity of localised Kristallnachts in numerous urban sites'.<sup>57</sup>

### The Prime Minister Cements Impunity - August 2005

In an ironic turn of events, the Sikh Prime Minister Manmohan Singh apologised for the 1984 massacres of Sikhs. But the Prime Minister's speeches failed to actively acknowledge or confront the horror of the massacres and instead continued the government's tradition of burying the truth. His speech anaesthetised the stark reality of the organised carnage and the subsequent years of impunity. He warned against partisan politics, yet his speech focused on the alleged contributions of the Congress party to Punjab, after India's independence. After discussing the "events of 1980s," in Punjab, when Punjab experienced a militant movement and brutal police counter-insurgency, Prime Minister Singh raised the spectre of a return of "terrorism" in Punjab to those who had vociferously opposed the Action Taken Report (ATR) the day before. In his speech, Prime Minister Singh devoted more time to implicitly connecting criticism of the ATR to terrorism in Punjab, than he did to seriously addressing the injustices against the survivors of the massacres. In his Rajya Sabha speech, Prime Minister Singh again brought up the fear of terrorism, stating that "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

The Prime Minister saved his strongest sentiments for exonerating the Congress Party: "They have finally nailed the lie and they have shown that all these canards which have been spread about the involvement of the top leadership of the Congress Party in those dastardly acts were totally untrue."<sup>58</sup> Prime Minister Singh saluted Jagdish Tytler, who was repeatedly cited by survivors as a leader of the massacres, as "a valued colleague."<sup>59</sup> Thus, as survivors and witnesses continued to describe the role of Congress (I) leaders in organising and implementing the massacres, the Prime Minister called them liars and praised the perpetrators, rendering meaningless his calls for continuing the search for truth. The Prime Minister's Rajya Sabha speech added a statement against remembrance of the massacres, criticising an MP who had highlighted how assailants targeted all segments of Sikh society during the 1984 massacres.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Break the cycle of impunity and torture in Punjab (2003), Amnesty International.

<sup>52</sup> A Judicial Blackout: Judicial Impunity for Disappearances in Punjab, India (2002) Harvard Human Rights Journal, Jaskaran Kaur.

<sup>53</sup> Rajiv Gandhi – Son of a Dynasty, BBC Books (1990), Nicholas Nugent, p177.

<sup>54</sup> Justice Eludes Families of the Disappeared in Punjab (10th June 2003), Human Rights Watch.

<sup>55</sup> In February 2002, the Muslims in the state of Gujarat were massacred in their thousands in a similar pattern to that of the Sikhs earlier. See: We Have No Orders To Save You – State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat (2002), Human Rights Watch.

<sup>56</sup> India: Facing the Twenty-First Century (1993), Barbara Crossette p32 quoted in Fighting for Faith and Nation (1996), Cynthia Mahmood p261.

<sup>57</sup> Cambridge History of India Series, Paul Brass, quoted in A Sea of Orange - writings on the Sikhs & India (2001), Cynthia Mahmood, p 146.

<sup>58</sup> Twenty Years of Impunity - The November 1984 Pogroms of Sikhs in India (2006), Jaskaran Kaur. <sup>1</sup> Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Lok Sabha Speech.

<sup>59</sup> Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Rajya Sabha Speech.

1849	British occupation and annexation of Punjab.
1900-1910	Gadhr movement for home rule.
1919	Massacre of Sikhs, Hindus & Muslims at Jallianwalla Bagh, Amritsar.
1920-1925	Mass civil agitation for Sikh cultural and civil rights. Congress party promise Sikhs 'a glow of freedom' in a 'secular' India. Sikhs join the Indian independence movement in large numbers. <sup>59</sup>
Aug 1947	End of British rule. Transfer of power to India and Pakistan. Hastily and controversial partition of Punjab between India and Pakistan, involving bloody ethnic cleansing between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims.
Sep 1947	Governor of Punjab, C.M. Trevedi issues a confidential circular to the head of Punjab police describing Sikhs as a 'criminal people' and instructs officials to take 'special measures' against them.
1949	Sikhs call for the establishment of a 'Punjabi Suba' – Punjab officialised as a Punjabi speaking area in par with other Indian states.
1950	Sikhs reject Indian constitution which defines them as Hindus and not a separate religion in its own right.
1951	Hindu groups and Press launch campaign to persuade Hindu Punjabis to disown Punjabi language as their mother tongue.
1955	Sikhs resolve to launch mass public agitation for recognition of a Punjabi speaking Punjab province (within Indian union). Indian refuses to grant recognition to Punjabi as official language of Punjab. Indian police fire on protesters in Amritsar.
1956	Indian government re-organises provinces based on regional languages. Punjab is excluded from this, being treated as a 'Hindi speaking area'.
1957	200,000 Sikh protests march in Delhi to protest at discrimination and human rights abuses against Sikhs.
1960-1966	Sikh civil agitation for Punjabi language based state. 60,000 Sikh agitators arrested.
1966	Indian government concede demand for recognition of Punjabi as official language of Punjab - over 10 years after other geographical languages in India granted official recognition. Significant territories of East Punjab carved out into adjacent provinces of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.
1962, 1971	Sikhs in Army forefront in defending India's borders in Indo-Pak wars.
1973	Sikhs declare Anandpur Sahib Resolution, a charter of Sikh cultural, religious and national rights.
1975	Indira Gandhi, Indian Prime Minister found guilty of electoral fraud by Indian Courts. Prime Minister responds by imposing a state of 'emergency' and assuming dictatorial powers. Opposition politicians and human rights activists incarcerated. Right to life suspended. Blanket censorship on media. Widespread human rights abuses. Police state conditions prevail. Sikhs launch open agitation from Golden Temple Complex (Amritsar) against 'emergency'. Daily arrests, totally to 50,000 Sikhs.
1978	Police shooting at Sikh protesters in Amritsar, killing 13, wounding hundreds.
1982-1984	Sikh mass civil obedience for human rights. 300,000 protesters arrested. Widespread human rights abuses by Indian police. Indian Army impose a cap on the percentage of Sikhs in the army. 75% of Punjab's river waters diverted into neighbouring states in violation of international riparian laws. At Asian Games in 1982, all Sikhs, including VIPs, humiliated by stop and searches.
Feb 1984	The start of organised pogroms against the Sikhs of neighbouring Haryana and Rajasthan.
Jun 1984	150,000 troops deployed in Punjab. The Golden Temple complex and 40 other shrines are attacked following a news blackout. Operation Woodrose, the mass arrest of Sikhs in Punjab begin. Tens of thousands of Sikhs killed or 'disappeared'.
31 Oct 1984	Assassination of Indian Prime Minister by her two Sikh bodyguards.
Nov 1984	Massacre of Sikhs throughout India.
Dec 1984	Congress elected on the back of an anti-Sikh wave.
1985	Punjab Peace Accord is signed, but within a year is shelved.
1986-1987	After a long period of civil disobedience and broken promises a grassroot armed movement for human rights and freedom emerges.
1987-1994	The state reacts with Operation Rakshat II, a police counter-insurgency which begins to abduct, torture and kill thousands across Punjab. Basic civil rights including right to life curtailed.
16 Jan 1995	Jaswant Singh Khalra, general secretary of the Akali Dal's human rights wing, and Jaspal Singh Dhillon release copies of official documents that showed that security agencies in Punjab had secretly cremated thousands of bodies.
6 Sep 1995	Armed commandoes of the Tarn Taran police, Amritsar district, abducted Khalra from outside his house.
28 Oct 1995	Khalra is executed at Jhahal police station and his body dumped in the Harike canal.
8 Aug 2005	Nanavati report released into the November 1984 pogroms.
18 Nov 2005	6 Punjab police officers convicted of Khalra's abduction and murder.

"In future, the Congress shall accept no constitution which does not meet with the satisfaction of the Sikhs"

- The Lahore session of the Congress Party, December 31, 1929.

"The brave Sikhs of Punjab are entitled to special considerations. I see nothing wrong in an area set up in the North of India wherein, the Sikhs can also experience the glow of freedom."

- J. L. Nehru, Lahore Bulletin, Jan 9, 1930.

"I ask you to accept my word and the Resolution of the Congress that it will not betray a single individual much less a community. Let God be the witness of the bond that binds me and the Congress with you (the Sikhs)." When pressed further Gandhi said that Sikhs would be justified in drawing their swords out of the scabbards as Guru Gobind Singh had asked them to, if Congress would resile from its commitment.

- M.K. Gandhi, speaking to Sikhs at Gurdwara Sisganj, Delhi, March 1931.

The current political crisis in Punjab stems from the British colonisation of Punjab in 1849, and later the splitting up of Punjab between the two states of India and Pakistan in 1947 as part of the termination of British rule. The bulk of Sikh population reside in East Punjab, ceded to the state of India in 1947. Ever since 1947, there has been a constant political tussle between the Sikhs and successive Indian governments, with promises made by the Indian National Congress (see above). These were broken after independence. There has been numerous civil agitations by the Sikhs for recognition and implementation of principal rights and freedoms including self-determination in the form of political self-governance for Punjab (the Sikh 'homeland'). The Sikhs have felt "unequal and subjugated" in the Indian Union, and have sought constitutional changes to give them 'self-determination' as an autonomous state within an Indian confederation. Successive Sikh civil agitations have continue to aggravate relations between the Sikh community and the Indian state. Sikhs have pressed for their existence as a distinct people and nationality, alongside determined efforts by Indian governments to merge the Sikhs into the Indian 'mainstream'.

In 1982, the Sikh leaders commenced a new mass civilian agitation, in a further push for historic rights and freedoms. The reaction of the Indian government was immediately suspicious and hostile. The Sikhs pursued a long peaceful campaign of civil protests, boycotts of government services, road blockades and mass arrests. A total of 300,000 were arrested and incarcerated between 1982 and April 1984. The Indian government sought to criminalise and demonise this mounting peaceful agitation. It secret services perpetrated and instigated insidious acts of sectarian violence and 'terrorism', which were routinely attributed to Sikh campaigners. Instead of addressing historic Sikh grievances, and engaging in a constructive dialogue to reach a political solution, the Indian government felt it better to mount an aggressive counter campaign of public demonisation of Sikh leaders, accusations of terrorism and use of police repression to harass and intimidate Sikh activists. Hundreds of Sikh activists and civilians were suspiciously killed in police custody, with many being hideously tortured prior to their concealed deaths. Amnesty International has documented the use of torture throughout India as 'routine' and 'endemic'. This open state violence and repression against the Sikh community, resulted in pockets of Sikhs forming into militant groups to combat this 'war' of persecution and carnage. Eliminating this handful of 'terrorists' and 'militants', was to become the sole focus of the Indian government's policies on Punjab; neglecting the historic ongoing grievances of the Sikh population.<sup>60</sup>

In early 1984, the Indian government started to signal its intention to swoop down hard on the challenge of 'Sikh terrorism' and 'Sikh separatism'. Meanwhile, the Sikh leaders and the Sikh people, became increasingly disaffected with the Indian states failure to take any positive action to remedy Sikh grievances and stop ongoing state violence and discrimination against the Sikhs. After fifty years of failure and rejection, the Sikhs became increasingly disenchanted with any hope of any concessions of political rights from the Indian state. As one Sikh protest banner said: "We wanted Justice governments gave us bullets". Sikhs described their communities situation as one of subjugation and domination, citing many examples of discrimination.

In May 1984, exasperated Sikh leaders commenced a daring defiance of the Indian state. They called for all grain supplies from Punjab ('India's bread basket') to India to be stopped, until the Indian government gave a positive demonstration of its willingness to give legal effect to historically denied Sikh rights. For the Indian government, this was the opportunity for a mighty military crackdown. This was India's infamous Operation Bluestar.

"It is a pity that Sikhs have to agitate, struggle and sacrifice lives for their constitutional demands, the kind of which are usually granted automatically to other states and communities. While most linguistic states in India were carved out in 1950s, Punjabi state was agreed upon in 1966, only after a decades of great peaceful satyagrahas (protests) and sacrifices by the Sikhs. While no other state was deprived of its capital, today 25 years later, Sikhs still continue to struggle and sacrifice lives for their Chandigarh."

*The Language and Culture of the Punjabis, by Asha Bhatnagar*

<sup>59</sup> Sikh contribution to the Indian independence movement - Martyrs: 75% were Sikhs; Life imprisonment: 80%; Hanged 80%; Joined Bose's Indian National Army 60% (during period, Sikhs made up just 2% of population).

- Quoted in Recovery of India (1992), Rajinder Puri, p 99.

<sup>60</sup> According to Martin Luther King Jr, the US civil rights leader, "grassroot violence is the violence of the unheard people." Many human rights and political observers has commented that the sheer colossal scale of violence and repression by the Indian state in Punjab, has directly contributed to the growth of a grassroot militant resistance.

# Who are the Sikhs?

The Sikhs' geographical and cultural origins are from Punjab (a region in the north of South Asia, bordering with Kashmir). In 1947 the whole of Punjab was split in half between India (East Punjab) and Pakistan (West Punjab). There are approximately 12-15 million Sikhs living in East Punjab presently forming 65% of the population. The emergence of the Sikh people came about through the mix of social, religious, cultural and political conflicts that dominated northern India from the 12th century to 18th century. Between 1764 and 1849, the Sikhs emerged as a self-governing people, with an independent sovereign government in Punjab, until it was conquered by the British.

Sikhism preaches a message of devotion and remembrance of God at all times, truthful living, equality of mankind (sees all religions as equals), gender equality and denounces superstitions and blind rituals. Sikh principles are a guide to action as in the case of their 9th teacher, Guru Tegh Bahadur, who was executed by India's Moghul rulers for defending the principle of freedom of religion (in his case, for Hindus to practice their religion without persecution). Sikhism is open to all through the teachings of its 10 Gurus (teachers) enshrined in the Sikh Holy Book and Living Guru, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, which also includes contributions from Hindu and Muslim Saints.

**The Golden Temple** In Amritsar, Punjab, is the Sikhs' national institution. Its foundation stone was laid in 1589 by the Muslim saint, Mian Mir of Lahore. The four entrances symbolises openness to all races, castes and creeds.

# Films on 1984



**Amu** (2005), a film by Shonali Bose

Amu is the story of Kajju, a 21 year-old Indian American woman who returns to India to visit her family. The film takes a dark turn as Kajju stumbles against secrets and lies from her past. A horrifying genocide that took place twenty years ago turns out to hold the key to her mysterious origins.

[www.amuthethefilm.com](http://www.amuthethefilm.com)

**1984 Sikhs' Kristallnacht** (2004), edited by Parvinder Singh

An authoritative account, using eyewitness testimony, of the massacres of India's minority Sikh community during the course of 1984 and the repression that took place in the state of Punjab in the decade afterwards. This film was first shown by the 1984 Truth & Justice campaign to MPs in the UK Houses of Parliament to raise awareness on the 20th anniversary of the pogroms.

Film footage shown courtesy of the 'Sikhs', BBC (12 April 1999); Ken Rees, ITN (1-4 Nov 1984); 'Rajiv - the alternative', BBC (Dec 1984); Eastern Eye, C4 (Jan 1985); 'The Riddle of Midnight', Sir Salman Rushdie (1987); 'Disappearances in Punjab', Ram Narayan Kumar (1995).

[www.youtube.com/1984TruthandJustice](http://www.youtube.com/1984TruthandJustice)

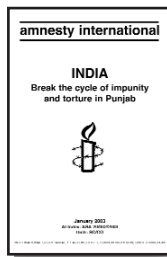
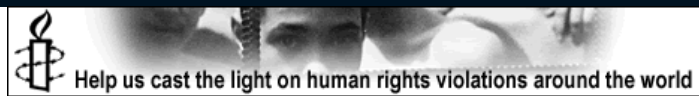


**The Widow Colony** (Sach Productions, 2005), Director: Harpreet Kaur

"The Widow Colony — India's Unsettled Settlement", borrows its name from the settlement in Tilak Vihar, on the west-side of New Delhi, which is locally called the Widow Colony or Vidhva Colony. The film takes the viewer to the streets of Trilokpuri, Kalyanpuri, Himatpuri, Sultanpuri and Mongolpuri, the same localities that suffered the major brunt of the Sikh killings in November of 1984.

[www.thewidowcolony.com](http://www.thewidowcolony.com)

## Amnesty International Reports



**Break the Cycle of Impunity and Torture in Punjab, Jan 2003**  
ASA 20/002/2003

**India: State Continues to Obstruct Justice in Punjab, 2001**  
ASA 20/031/2001

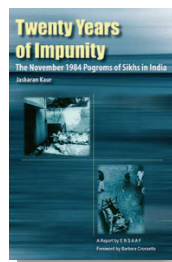
**A vital opportunity to end impunity in Punjab, Aug 1999**  
ASA 20/024/1999

**A Mockery of Justice – The case concerning the 'disappearance' of human rights defender Jaswant Singh Khalra severely undermined, Apr 1998** ASA 20/07/98

To access reports log on to: [www.amnesty.org/library/engindex](http://www.amnesty.org/library/engindex) (search with AI ASA reference)

## Books on 1984

**Twenty Years of Impunity - The November 1984 Pogroms of Sikhs in India (2006)**  
Jaskaran Kaur  
[www.ensaaf.org/docs/20years.php](http://www.ensaaf.org/docs/20years.php)



**A Sea of Orange - Writings on the Sikhs and India (2001)**  
Cynthia Mahmood  
[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



**The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerrilla Violence (1995)**  
Joyce J.M. Pettigrew  
[www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



## Useful websites

**November 1984 pogroms**  
Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee  
[www.carnage84.com](http://www.carnage84.com)

**We Have No Orders To Save You – State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat (2002)**  
Human Rights Watch  
[www.hrw.org/reports/2002/india](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/india)

**A Judicial Blackout: Judicial Impunity for Disappearances in Punjab - Harvard Human Rights Journal (2002), Jaskaran Kaur**  
[www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/hrj/iss15/kaur.shtml](http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/hrj/iss15/kaur.shtml)

**Fighting Impunity in India - Ensaaf**  
[www.ensaaf.org](http://www.ensaaf.org)

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*19 April 2004: A Written Declaration was tabled on the floor of the European Parliament supporting the needs for a Commission of Truth and Justice into the events of 1984, citing this report.*

*26 May 2004: Report was released by British MPs at the House of Commons. sign the on-line petition at [www.petitiononline.com/84geno/petition.html](http://www.petitiononline.com/84geno/petition.html)*

*Some of the disappeared, tortured, raped, extra judicially executed and illegally cremated*



*'Why doesn't the judiciary take any action against them? These judge-folks, they know everything. They hear the pain in the voices of the victims and see the honesty in their eyes. Yet they are helpless . . . it's been six-and-a-half years since I've been pushed around, and still I have no relief.'*

*- Mohinder Singh, father of Jagraj Singh.  
Disappeared 14 January 1995*

*'I have no hope. In ten to fifteen years, we will also sit down and give up. How much can we do?'*

*- Paramjeet Kaur, wife of Jaswant Singh Khalsa.  
Disappeared 6 September 1995*