

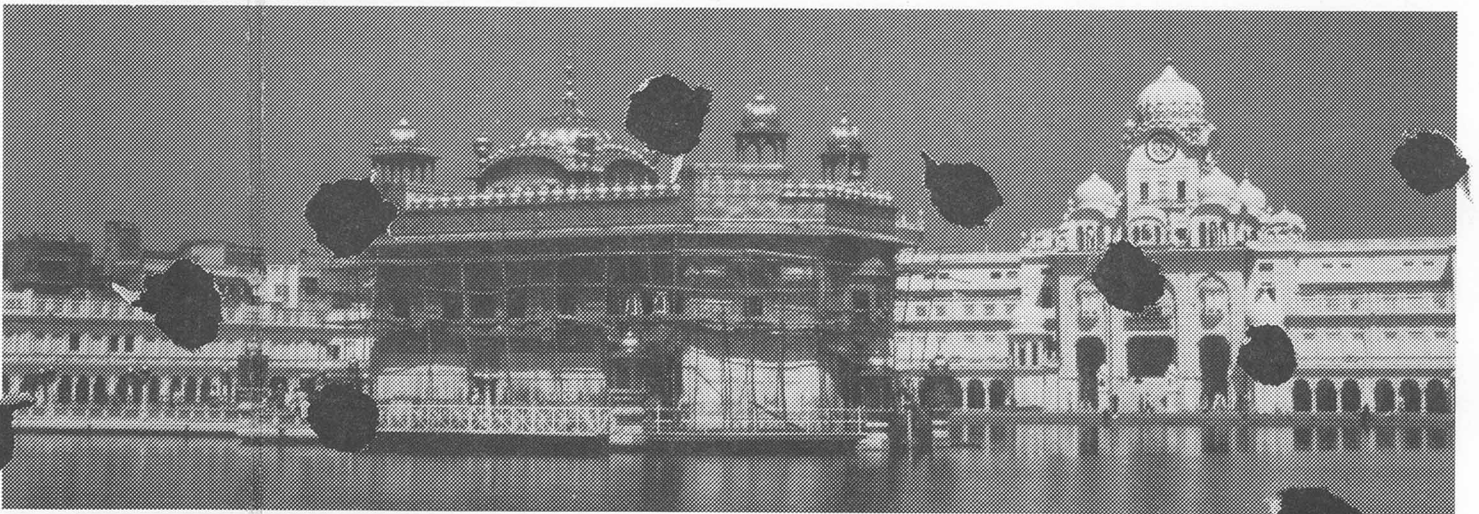
# The Sikhs of India are much like the American colonists of 1776.

Hard-working. Tolerant. Enterprising. Industrious. Charitable. Committed to individual freedoms and a voice in their own government.

Why then, on June 6th, 1984, did their government coordinate attacks on 40 shrines of the Sikh religion—killing untold numbers of men, women and children—and desecrating their most sacred place of worship, the Golden Temple of Amritsar???

The Indian government said it was trying to crush a terrorist/separatist movement.

Why then has the government erected a wall of carefully contrived secrecy around the Sikh homeland—a wall which hides the facts about that bloody day from the eyes of the world???



## Why should Americans care...

...about the fate of 14 million people who live 10,000 miles from our shore?

### Because we are Americans

And because individual freedoms are just as important in India today as they were here in 1776.

This message is sponsored by the Sikhs here in America. Our intent is to make known the facts surrounding the recent tragic events in India. Our hope is that America will raise its collective voice in protest. And our goal is to preserve that small oasis of independence and peace that was the Sikh homeland until repression was inflicted by the ruling government of India.

Here is our story...

## The Sikhs: An Admirable People with Progressive Beliefs

“He was a Sikh at heart, Sahib. He was rich, open-handed, just, a friend of the poor troopers, keen-eyed, jestful and careless. I could tell tales about him...”  
Rudyard Kipling, *A Sahib's War* (1901)

Some 14 million of the world's people follow the religion of Sikhism. The vast majority of Sikhs live in the Punjab state of Northwestern India—although there are many Sikhs living throughout the world, including almost a quarter of a million in America.

The Sikhs derive their ancestry from the Aryans—who migrated to Northwestern India from the Caucasian Mountains some three thousand years ago. In the late 15th Century, one of their descendants—a holy man and teacher named Guru Nanak—founded the Sikh religion. It is a religion that, in addition to its own original precepts, combines aspects of Hinduism and Islam. Guru Nanak's teachings rejected the caste system of Hinduism and the worship of idols and multiple gods. He taught that all people were created equal and that all religions lead to the same high truth.

“The Sikh Religion and its Scripture, the *Adi Granth*, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion is itself a monument of creative intercourse between two traditional religions...”  
Historian Arnold Toynbee

Sikhs believe in one God, and the equality of all men and women. They fervently practice the work ethic. They are committed to protection of the weak and the oppressed. Their social beliefs are structured around human rights—and the basic dignity of the human spirit.

Sikhism is a democratic religion—with no priestly class or church hierarchy. It stresses community service, individual liberties, and the direct relationship of humanity to God. Sikhs comprise only 2% of India's population. But over the years, they have made contributions to the free Indian nation that are more significant than their numbers might suggest. They contribute as much as 26% of India's total economic output and 60% of India's critical food stockpiles. (Christian Science Monitor, 6/18/84.)



“The Sikhs, India's most distinctive and virile community, are not only the country's most successful farmers, they also have burst aggressively into business and commerce.”  
Wall Street Journal, 9/26/83

“It was the Sikhs who helped spawn the ‘green revolution’ in agriculture—the single most stunning accomplishment of India's independent years.”  
Christian Science Monitor, 6/18/84

“Industrious and ambitious, the Sikhs have turned Punjab, one of the few areas in which they form a majority, into a model of agricultural efficiency, thereby helping make India self-sufficient in wheat.”  
Time Magazine, 6/18/84

Sikhs fought side-by-side with the British in World Wars I and II—winning a reputation for their valor and their leadership. During India's struggle for independence, they fought against the British—many say more effectively than any other Indians—at great personal cost. In the successful fight for independence, 3,697 Sikhs were hanged, killed or imprisoned for life—versus 1,074 Non-Sikhs. Yet, they comprised only 1 1/2% of the population.

When India was granted independence and partitioned in 1947, massive populations of Moslems and Hindus were given their own geographic nations. The hard-fighting and hard-working Sikhs decided to join with predominantly-Hindu India—and put their faith in the Indian government to protect their interests.

A people who value human rights. A people who have defended India against scores of invaders throughout the centuries. A people who contribute in all respects to the independent nation of India.

These are the people who have been victimized by the bloody massacre at the Golden Temple of Amritsar. Under orders from India's Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi...

## The Massacre: Outrage at the Sikhs' Holiest Temple

“In sweltering heat and the dust of the battle's aftermath, black crows and vultures perched on the temple's ballustrades in search of grisly carrion. For the first time in the 400-year history of the Golden Temple, the 24-hour prayer vigil had ceased.”  
Time Magazine, 6/18/84

Events leading up to the massacre provide an important framework for understanding why it happened—and what it means. The year 1982 provides a good starting point, Sikhs in the Punjab initiated negotiations with the Indian government to redress some long-standing grievances.

One of these grievances reflected an issue that fired up American patriots in 1776: The Sikhs sought an end to an unfair government taxation system which did not return benefits to the Punjab state. They also sought to halt diversion of their essential water supplies to other areas of India—in violation of international and Indian laws. Finally, the Sikhs sought recognition of their religion by the government.

“Among the Sikh demands have been Vatican-like status for Amritsar, constitutional recognition that their religion is separate from Hinduism, adjustments of Punjab's borders, and a greater share of regional waters for the state.”  
Associated Press, 6/7/84

Demands by the Sikhs for reforms and equity were ignored by Indira Gandhi's government. Moderate voices of the Akali Dal political party were joined by increasingly strident voices—including those of Sant Singh Bhindranwale and his followers. And still the demands fell on deaf ears.

Part of the reason was the tenuous state of Indira Gandhi's government. Intensifying political problems had given Gandhi's ear and sympathies to the more militant and numerous Hindu segment of the Indian population. Gandhi views the Sikh's desire to maintain a

distinct social, cultural and religious identity as a threat to her control. Reacting to Bhindranwale's agitation and frustrations, she has condemned Sikhs overall as “separatists,” “terrorists” and “anti-nationals.” It is estimated that more than 100,000 Sikhs have been jailed by the government over the past three years. Punjab Sikhs have reported widespread torture—and execution of “extremists” by the government.

Telling the predominantly Hindu nation that she would eliminate Sikh “terrorists” in the Punjab, she took her first fateful step on June 2, 1984 by sealing off the Punjab territory.

“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.”  
Christian Science Monitor, 6/8/84

A few days later, on June 6th, India's army—supported by tanks, artillery and helicopters—attacked the holiest of Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple of Amritsar. Even the most conservative estimates indicate that more than a thousand Sikhs, including women and children, were killed in the raid upon the holy temple. Sikhs within the complex, although massively outnumbered, defended the Temple ferociously, and there were substantial Indian Army casualties during the attack. Simultaneously, the Indian Army assaulted and shut down 40 more Sikh Temples in the Punjab.

“The Amritsar deputy police superintendent, who helped remove bodies from the temple grounds, said at least 13 of the victims were shot with their hands bound. ‘It was a virtual massacre,’ said the Jullandar doctor. ‘A large number of women, children and pilgrims were gunned down.’”  
Associated Press, 6/14/84

Because the Indian government has placed a tight lid on information about the Temple massacre, actual Sikh casualties in the assault on Amritsar can only be approximated. A few American Sikhs have been successful in contacting relatives in the region. Eyewitnesses placed the number of casualties at several thousand. They also described the “indiscriminate” murder of Sikh civilians by Indian troops in the bazaars around the temple complex.

Sant Bhindranwale, as reported by the *New York Times*, died of 14 bullet wounds. Hundreds of Sikh pilgrims, civilians and Bhindranwale followers were cremated in mass funeral pyres near the Golden Temple. Many hundreds more were arrested.

“Bhindranwale had to be killed,” said one highly placed Indian government source... ‘Better a martyr dead than a political motivator alive.’”  
Knight News Service, 6/10/84

“Mopping up after the death of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the fiery leader of the militants, the government has now arrested more than 3,000 of his political and religious followers. The government has also turned up its propaganda machine, suggesting, implausibly, that both Pakistan and the CIA had supported the Sikh separatist movement in an effort to destabilize India.”  
Newsweek, 6/25/84

Eight days after the massacre, a team of only six western reporters—accompanied by Indian reporters—were allowed into Punjab for a carefully guided tour of the Golden Temple. No photographs were allowed. But sobering reports were written...

“All around were signs of killing and destruction—bullet-pocked walls and parapets, minarets with their tops sheared away, marble esplanades still wet from hosing to remove the blood.”  
New York Times, 6/17/84

## The Aftermath: Grief, Anger and Continuing Repression

“It was one of the worst 24-hour periods in the history of modern India.”  
Christian Science Monitor, 6/17/84

“You can't begin to understand our reactions,” insisted one Sikh, “unless you think in terms of the Vatican being besieged and overrun by Storm Troopers.”  
Newsweek, 6/18/84

Grief-stricken Indian Sikhs who live outside the Punjab have protested the military action and expressed their outrage. The response? Further repressive measures from Indira's government. Sikhs have been forbidden to visit their temples to hold protest meetings. Immediately following the massacre, thousands of Sikh soldiers in the Indian Army left their posts and travelled to their ruined shrine.

Time Magazine (6/25/84) reported that at least 55 of these “deserters” have been killed, and 3,097 arrested. Sikh members of the Indian Parliament—from Indira Gandhi's own party—have resigned their seats in protest.

Khushwant Singh, Pulitzer Prize-winning Sikh historian and member of Parliament, told Time Magazine (6/18/84): “What happened inside the Golden Temple is a turning point in India's modern history. I don't understand why Mrs. Gandhi gave the order. We had been given assurances that there would never be an armed intervention. But they have gone back on their word. No serious Sikh can entertain thoughts of talking to Mrs. Gandhi now.”

“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.”  
Christian Science Monitor, 6/18/84

In the wake of the Amritsar horrors, even the most moderate Sikhs are changing their way of thinking. They are beginning to feel—like the slain Bhindranwale—that ultimately, the only way that Sikhs can survive is to establish their own independent state in the Punjab. Many thousands more are comparing their situation to that of the Jews under German Nazis. And they dread an impending holocaust. Coincidentally, there are almost the same number of Jews and Sikhs in the world.

## Righting the Wrongs: Some Immediate Goals

The Sikhs, who have a rich tradition of defending their rights, will fight back to help make sure that those who died in the Golden Temple will not have done so in vain. A new, long-range Sikh policy regarding relations with the Indian government is being formulated in the wake of the sudden and tragic events in the Punjab. Sikhs throughout the world endorse the following immediate goals:

- Return of the Golden Temple, and all other Sikh temples, to the control of the Sikh community, in their present condition.
- Proper medical care for the wounded and injured Sikhs in the Punjab.
- Restoration of civil liberties to the Sikhs in Punjab and throughout the “democracy” of India.
- Impartial investigations by the United Nations

and other reputable worldwide organizations.

- Free access of the international press to Punjab.
- The release of Sikhs who were imprisoned during and after the massacre, including the many Sikh soldiers who have been arrested for “mutiny.”
- The withdrawal from the Punjab of thousands of military, police and paramilitary forces—put there by the Indian government.

This message has been made possible by the efforts and donations of many American Sikhs, including the following Temples and Sikh organizations:

The Sikh Temples of Stockton, Los Angeles, Fremont, El Sobrante, San Jose, Sacramento, Yuba Valley, Livingston, Live Oak, and San Joaquin, California; Durham, North Carolina; Chicago, Illinois; Houston, Texas; Michigan; Rochester, New York; Washington, D.C.; New Orleans, Louisiana. The Sikh Cultural Societies of Seattle and Florida. The Guru Nanak Societies of Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio. Hem Kunt Foundation, New York. Garden State Sikh Association. The Sikh Heritage Foundation. The Sikh Center of New York. Tri-State Sikh Cultural Society, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Glenn Rock, New Jersey. Sri Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Silver Springs, Maryland. North America Akali Dal. Sikh Council of North America. Nankana Sahib Foundation, Washington, D.C.; Sikh Foundation, Palo Alto, California.

## What you can do to help

Most Sikhs will tell you that scars from the Golden Temple massacre will never heal. But the wounds can be dressed, and action can be taken to overcome the dehumanizing repression being inflicted on the Sikh people by Indira Gandhi's government.

If you support self-determination for this proud and industrious people...if you value religious freedom and other basic human rights...if you can spare a few short minutes to proclaim your support...then PLEASE—help them now in this, their hour of need. Just a few short minutes to clip and send some coupons...Such a small and painless price to pay for human liberty...

“As long as the army keeps news reporters and other outsiders from traveling in Punjab except on tightly controlled military tours, there is no way of knowing what excesses might be committed.”  
New York Times, 6/8/84

TO: American National Red Cross  
17th & D Streets, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20003

There may be scores of Sikhs in the Indian state of Punjab who require medical attention—due to the recent Indian army assaults and the violence which has erupted there. Please use the good services of your organization to investigate, and to bring medical aid to those who may be in serious need of it. Thank You.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

TO: President Ronald Reagan  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20015

I'm deeply concerned about the fate of the Sikhs in the Indian state of Punjab. Attacks by the Indian Army on their religious temples have left thousands dead, injured, or arrested—a scenario which should be unacceptable to every freedom-loving American. Please help us uncover the truth about what's happened to the Sikhs, and help restore basic freedoms to these 14 million proud and industrious people. Thank You.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

TO: Hon. Charles H. Percy, Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs  
4229 Dirksen Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

During the last several weeks in the Indian state of Punjab, thousands of Sikhs have been killed or arrested by Indian Army forces. A wall of secrecy has been erected around the Punjab. I ask you to hold hearings on the Punjab massacres, and recommend appropriate Congressional action to push for the facts. Thank You.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

TO: Javier Perez de Cuellar  
Secretary-General, United Nations  
New York, NY 10002

I strongly urge the United Nations to establish an investigative commission to look into the recent tragic events in the Punjab state of India. Thousands of Sikhs have been killed or arrested by the Indian government—all in the name of eliminating “separatist” elements in their society. Your investigation and your ultimate action—would help restore peace and help avert further bloody conflict. Thank You.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

TO: Hon Dante B. Fascell, Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

During the last several weeks in the Indian state of Punjab, thousands of Sikhs have been killed or arrested by Indian Army forces. A wall of secrecy has been erected around the Punjab. I ask you to hold hearings on the Punjab massacres, and recommend appropriate Congressional action to push for the facts. Thank You.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

TO: Punjab Relief Fund  
Sikh Temple  
1930 South Grant Street  
Stockton, CA 95206

I am deeply disturbed by the killings of your people and the desecration of your sacred places of worship in the Punjab. I'd like to make a contribution so that you might continue to make public the true story of what has happened, to help restore your places of worship, and to aid the wounded and homeless Sikhs of the Punjab.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_