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COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN

"RECOGNIZE YE ALL THE HUMAN RACE AS ONE"

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Master

NOVEMBER 5, 1991

STATEMENT BY
DR. GURMIT SINGH AULAKH
PRESIDENT
COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN

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The violation of human rights in India exist on such a wide scale it is difficult for us as Americans to fully comprehend the suffering and the betrayal felt by India's minority populations: the Sikhs, the Kashmiris, the Assamese, the Tamils, the Christians of Nagaland, and even the so-called "untouchables" or low caste Hindus, who, though not properly a minority, are perhaps the world's most oppressed people.

But I am here not to talk of all these other nations and communities, but of the one I know most: the Sikh nation. And as students of history and politics, as surely some of you are, you will agree one must first understand the past to fully comprehend the present.

The Sikh people comprise not only a culture and a faith, but a nation as well. (The Punjab, just east of Pakistan and south of Kashmir, is our homeland -- the land of our birth, and in too many cases during the past decade, the land of our death.) The Sikhs ruled an undivided Punjab from 1765 to 1849 directly before the era of British colonial rule. At that point Sikh rule extended well into present day Pakistan and past Kashmir up to the Khyber Pass. According to the records, the British forces fought an arduous, heavily taxing campaign against the formidable Sikh army and quite nearly failed to conquer our land. The Sikhs were the last nation on the Indian subcontinent to fall to British expansionism, and were the first to raise the cry for freedom. Thus let it not be forgotten, that even then, the Sikhs were recognized as a distinct separate nation on the subcontinent; a distinct, separate power, independent unto itself; a sovereign nation with its own independent political system.

In 1947, when the subcontinent won its independence from British colonial rule, the British again recognized this fact and negotiated the transfer of power with three separate groups: the Muslims, the Hindus, and the Sikhs. As you might well imagine, during the considerable euphoria at that time, the Sikhs opposed the partition and struggled for a united multi-ethnic subcontinent. As you will remember, however, the Muslims agitated for a separate nation, Pakistan. Seeing partition as inevitable, the Sikhs did what they thought was the next best thing and joined with the majority Hindus forgoing the opportunity to reclaim complete sovereignty in its homeland.

The Sikh nation agreed to this only with the solemn assurances of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru (the first Prime Minister of India) that no constitution would be accepted that was unsatisfactory to the Sikhs. It was Nehru himself who said: "the Congress assures the Sikhs that no solution in any future constitution [of India] will be acceptable to the congress that does not give the Sikhs full satisfaction."

Yet, despite such constant promises, India ratified its constitution in 1950 against the expressed disapproval of the Sikh nation. The constitution was so inimical to Sikh interests that the Sikh representatives at the Constituent Assembly refused to append their signatures to the document. To this day, no Sikh leader has signed the Indian constitution.

Had not California signed the constitution of the United States, it would not be *part* of the United States. It seems however, though we in this room can agree on this simple point, the government of India is incapable of comprehending it. The Sikh nation never agreed to enter any Indian union, and the government of India has, since 1947, maintained an illegal control over us. To clear up any confusion whatsoever, the Sikh nation, on October 7, 1987, formally declared itself independent forming the sovereign country of Khalistan. The Indian government is an occupying force in a foreign land and the Sikh nation demands the immediate withdrawal of all Indian military forces from the soil of Khalistan and the immediate demarcation of boundaries between our two countries.

Since 1984 Indian government police, paramilitary forces and death squads have murdered almost 100,000 Sikhs. India has repeatedly desecrated the holiest of Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple, and in 1984 led an all out military attack on the Golden Temple complex and 38 other Sikh shrines which claimed the lives of over 20,000 innocent Sikhs.

Over 15,000 Sikh prisoners of conscience currently languish in Indian prisons without charge or trial -- some for as long as eight years. Between 20 to 30 Sikhs die everyday in extrajudicial killings. A year ago the New York Times (May 31, 1990) said "20,000 Sikh men and boys had disappeared in the custody of Indian policemen and intelligence agents over the last few years" alone. Today, the situation grows only bleaker.

On May 10th of this year Amnesty International released a blistering report on India's violation of human rights in the Sikh homeland. I quote:

thousands of people have been arrested by police and security forces in punjab . . .

Prisoners have been detained for months or years without trial under provisions of special legislation suspending normal legal safeguards, and reports of torture during interrogation are common. The arrest and detention of some detainees remains unacknowledged for weeks or months. Scores of people have simply "disappeared", the security forces refusing to admit that they had ever been arrested. It is feared that many of them have been killed in custody.

And this is what Asia Watch, an American based human rights group had to say about India's oppression against the Sikhs in its August 25th report, *Human Rights in India: Punjab in Crisis*:

Torture, extrajudicial murders, "encounter killings," rape, "disappearances," extortion, arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, the denial of freedom of press and expression, and the maintenance of internationally repudiated draconian laws are among the gross violations committed by the Indian government and its forces.

Asia Watch investigated many cases of extrajudicial killings of Sikhs by the security forces in staged "encounters" in which the police allege that they came under attack by militants. In most cases, however, the victims have simply been murdered in police custody. In some cases, the police have actually recruited and trained extrajudicial forces to carry out these killings.

The report adds that

Throughout Punjab, torture is practiced systematically in police stations, in prisons and in detention camps used by the paramilitary forces. In virtually every case Asia Watch investigated, persons taken into custody were tortured.

What we must understand is that India is not the democracy it claims to be. Look through the window of Indian society and you will see the land not of peace, love and tranquility propagated in popular fiction,

you will see the land not of the so-called "world's largest democracy" depicted in Indian propaganda but you will find a land of violence, political corruption, a land of killing and oppression on a scale that would shock even the most firmly entrenched cynic.

This is India today. This is what India so desperately tries to conceal from the international community. Can there be any other reason why India has refused to allow Amnesty International within its borders since 1978? Can anyone think of any other so-called democracy which refuses to allow access to international human rights groups? And for what other reason than to continue its the oppression of the Sikh and other minorities has India refused to sign the United Nations Covenant Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. No, India is not a democracy; it is an oppressive tyranny where violence is the only rule of law.

Under Indian rule Sikhs have no democratic rights. Since 1947 our homeland has been placed under presidential rule ten times. Since 1987 we have lived under non-stop presidential rule. And what is presidential rule but a euphemism for martial law? All democratic rights are suspended, rule comes directly from New Delhi, and our villages and cities are flooded with paramilitary forces ready to quell the slightest aspiration toward freedom. This is presidential rule.

India continues to maintain some of the most notorious discriminatory laws in the world. India calls itself a democracy, but under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (better known as TADA) the presumption of innocence is reversed to a presumption of guilt; the right to post bail is denied, confessions obtained through police torture are routinely admitted in the courts as evidence; trials can be held in jail cells; the legal remedy of habeas corpus goes unhonored; the identity of witnesses can be suppressed, cross examination denied; and the accused can be detained up to two years before even being charged with a crime. The United Nations Human Rights Committee recently called these draconian laws "disturbing" and "completely unacceptable."

Confronted with this by members of the international community, Indian government officials will claim that such laws are required to combat the so-called "Sikh terrorism." The truth of the matter is, however, that the Indian government has worked hard to propagate the myth of Sikh terrorism that it may be justified in its violent oppression against the Sikh nation. Never do we hear that these "terrorist" are captured, tried, and sentenced to terms in prison commensurate to the crimes they have supposedly committed. Instead we hear that they have been killed in "encounters" -- the same "encounters" Amnesty International and Asia Watch have called staged murders.

Or take the case of the bombing of the Air-India Boeing 747 on June 23, 1985. This jet exploded just off the coast of Ireland, and even before news of the bombing got to the media, India had issued a statement again blaming so-called "Sikh terrorists." Upon investigation it was found that all Indian government officials scheduled for the flight suspiciously canceled their reservations only a few hours before boarding. This led two reporters by the names of Kashmeri and McAndrew to embark on a four year investigation which uncovered an Indian government conspiracy to bomb the Air-India flight so that India could blame the Sikhs and discredit our independence movement. The Indian government killed 329 people in that bombing, most of them Canadian. And they want the rest of world to believe that Sikhs are the terrorists.

As far as the Sikhs are concerned, we refuse to sit idly by while the Indian government defiles us in the eyes of the world. We refuse to sit by while Indian forces rape our women, torture our leaders, and kill our youth. And it has been due to the work of Sikhs around the world that the Indian government is finally being exposed and the Sikh struggle for independence is now gaining worldwide attention.

On July 13, 1991, the National Federation of Young Republicans passed a resolution supporting independence for the Sikh nation and demanding the immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from the soil of Khalistan.

On June 27, 1991, the Associated Press put Khalistan on its list of the world's ten "Would-be-Nations" alongside Slovenia, Croatia and the Baltic states. On October 6, 1991 the *Washington Times*, as well, listed Punjab as one of the world's future members of the United Nations.

On September 16, 1991, Congressman Dan Burton from Indiana stated in the United States Congress that Khalistan is the only solution to the Punjab problem. Two weeks later, he and twenty other Members of Congress signed a letter to Abid Hussain, India's Ambassador to the United States, protesting the Indian government's maintenance of internationally repudiated draconian laws, and its brutal oppression of the Sikh nation.

Recently, when I was in Norway where I met with the Chairman and various other members of the Norwegian Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee who assured me they would work to link aid to India on the following conditions: 1) the immediate end to all violations of human rights, 2) the lifting of a ban on international human rights groups like Amnesty International, 3) the repeal of all of India's draconian laws, 4) a reduction in India's defense budget especially in the area of procurement of sophisticated weapons from outside sources, and 5) an acceptance of the Sikh nation's right to self-determination. Already Germany, and even the U.S. Congress have indicated a willingness to link aid to India to the same criterion.

On May 22, I appeared on CNN to explain the Sikh reaction to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and its impact on our struggle for freedom. This was aired throughout the world in 128 countries. On May 28, I appeared as the guest speaker for the Morning Newsmaker Program at the National Press Club and gave a complete history of the Sikh freedom movement. This was aired five times throughout the United States and was reported on the wire service.

India is being exposed and the world is taking action. The world is beginning to understand that the Sikh demand for independence is justified. The world knows that freedom is the only solution. For it is the very fact that the Sikh nation is not free that allows the violation of human rights in Khalistan to flourish with such audacity, with such strength and with such fury. In the absence of freedom nations cannot control their own destiny. In the absence of freedom a nation's very survival is imperiled, and like the Sikh nation, that nation is rendered a victim -- reduced to the status of slaves.

Sikhs refuse to choose oppression and slavery as their destiny. Like Americans we favor freedom and democracy, and it is on these principles which Khalistan will be founded. A free Sikh nation will help foster a new tradition of peace, democracy and freedom in South Asia -- a part of the world sorely in need of it. An independent Khalistan will have a 100 year friendship and defense treaty with the United States and will be the strongest ally of the United States in South Asia. The struggle for Sikh independence has been uphill all the way, and it will continue on the same arduous path. But success has been ours, and ultimately, Khalistan will be free.

DAN BURTON

8th DISTRICT, INDIANA

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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 1991

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His Excellency Abid Hussain
Ambassador of India
2107 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Ambassador:

We write with grave concern regarding the case of Lt. Col. Partap Singh, of Punjab. On May 15, 1991 Col. Partap Singh formally declared the formation of the Khalsa Raj Party. Its goal is the formation of a free and independent Khalistan. Its means were clearly stated as peaceful, democratic and non-violent.

According to the rules of free, democratic societies, Col. Partap Singh broke no law. Rather, he exercised his democratic right to free speech. Despite this, Col. Partap Singh was charged with a host of crimes under the Indian Penal Code and the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA).

As you are aware, India's TADA laws fall far short of international standards for the protection of individual civil and human rights. The United Nations Human Rights Committee called them "disturbing" and "completely unacceptable."


Under TADA, the presumption of innocence is reversed to a presumption of guilt, and the charged can be detained up to one year without a trial or even being charged with a crime. Had Col. Partap Singh remained in India, he would have faced illegal imprisonment, torture, and possibly death. Fortunately, however, Col. Partap is today safe in the United States.

In view of these facts, Mr. Ambassador, we are compelled to admonish the Indian government for its violation of human rights. As individuals who hold in the highest regard only those governments which respect political, religious and human rights, we request that the Indian government cease its blatant discrimination against the Sikhs. We ask that the TADA laws be at once abolished in the name of fairness and democracy. And we plead that all charges leveled against Lt. Col. Partap Singh be dropped, that he be allowed to return to his family on his native soil, and that his safety, upon return, be fully guaranteed by the government of India. We request your prompt assurance from the Indian government.


Sincerely,


DAN BURTON, M.C.



TOM LANTOS, M.C.

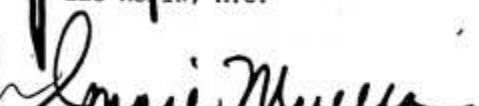

DUNCAN HUNTER, M.C.


ED. RALEOMAVAEGA, M.C.

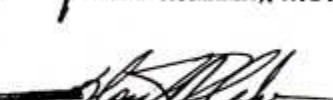

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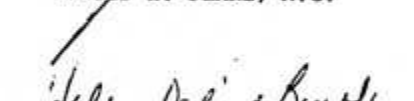

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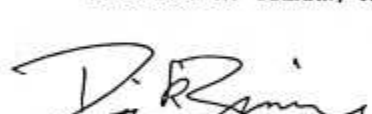

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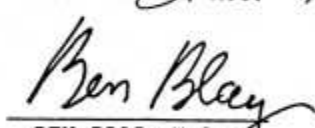

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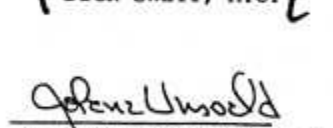

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
October 7, 1991

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VICE CHAIRMAN-PARKS

H.E. Abid Hussain
Ambassador
Embassy of India
2107 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Ambassador Hussain:

The case of Lt. Col. Partap Singh of Punjab was recently brought to my attention. I have been told that on May 15, 1991 Colonel Partap Singh formally declared the formation of the Khalsa Raj Party. The platform of this party is to seek a free and independent Khalistan through peaceful, nonviolent and democratic means.

I have been informed that because of Colonel Partap Singh's declaration and his leadership role within the Sikh community, he was charged with a number of crimes under the Indian Penal Code and the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. I am concerned about this situation because I understand that the United Nations Human Rights Committee has characterized these laws as "disturbing" and "completely unacceptable". It appears in some cases that an individual charged under these laws is presumed guilty until proven innocent. As I am sure you can understand, this is very troubling to Americans who guarantee presumed innocence by law.

While Colonel Partap Singh is presently in the United States, I am told that had he remained in India and were he to return, he could face detention up to two years without a trial or even being formally charged simply because he formed this political party and declared its platform. If this is true, it is also troublesome to Americans because of our strong belief that the freedoms of speech and assembly are principal foundations of a democracy. Without these freedoms guaranteed in both law and in practice, full democracy cannot be achieved.

I would appreciate it if you would comment on the issues I have raised, including the case of Lt. Col. Partap Singh and the crimes with which he is charged. I would also like to strongly urge the Indian Government to seriously reconsider the Terrorist

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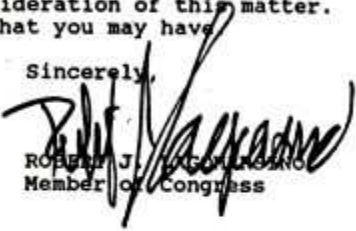
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H.E. Abid Hussain
October 7, 1991
Page 2

and Disruptive Activities Act and other laws which appear contrary to the basic rights guaranteed to individuals in a democratic system.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to any information that you may have.

Sincerely,



ROBERT J. CAVANAUGH
Member of Congress

RJL:mr

To terminate United States development assistance programs for India if the Government of India is implementing a policy which prevents representatives of human rights organizations from visiting India in order to monitor human rights in that country.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 19, 1991

Mr. BURTON (for himself, Mr. FAZIO, Mr. DREIER of California, Mr. PANETTA, Mr. PORTER, Mr. ASPIN, Mr. HUNTER, Mr. WILSON, Mr. CRANE, Mr. DEFAZIO, Mrs. MEYERS of Kansas, Mr. APPEGATE, Mr. HERGER, Mr. MILLER of California, Mr. BLAZ, Mr. CONDIT, Mr. GOSS, Mr. NOWAK, Mr. ARNET, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. FIELDS, Mr. TRAFICANT, Mr. ROHRBACHER, Mr. DOOLEY, Mr. PETRI, Mr. KLUG, Mr. DOOLITTLE, Mr. OWENS of Utah, and Mr. RAVENEL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To terminate United States development assistance programs for India if the Government of India is implementing a policy which prevents representatives of human rights organizations from visiting India in order to monitor human rights in that country.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

2

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

2 This Act may be cited as the "Human Rights in India
3 Act".

4 SEC. 2. DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FOR INDIA.

5 (a) REPORT ON ACCESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR-

6 ING ORGANIZATIONS.—Not later than 60 days after the date
7 of enactment of this Act, the President shall report to the
8 Congress whether the Government of India is implementing
9 a policy which prevents representatives of Amnesty Interna-
10 tional and other human rights organizations from visiting
11 India in order to monitor human rights conditions in that
12 country.

13 (b) TERMINATION OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
14 PROGRAMS.—If the President reports to the Congress, either
15 pursuant to subsection (a) or at any other time, that the Gov-
16 ernment of India is implementing a policy which prevents
17 representatives of Amnesty International and other human
18 rights organizations from visiting India in order to monitor
19 human rights conditions in that country, all assistance for
20 India under chapter 1 of part I of the Foreign Assistance Act
21 of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2151 and following; relating to develop-
22 ment assistance) shall be terminated, except for assistance to
23 continue the vaccine and immunodiagnostic development
24 project, the child survival health support project, and the pri-
25 vate and voluntary organizations for health II project.

3

1 (c) RESUMPTION OF ASSISTANCE.—Assistance termi-
2 nated pursuant to subsection (b) may be resumed only if the
3 President reports to the Congress that the Government of
4 India is no longer implementing a policy which prevents rep-
5 resentatives of Amnesty International and other human
6 rights organizations from visiting India in order to monitor
7 human rights conditions in that country.

July 13, 1991

YOUNG REPUBLICAN NATIONAL FEDERATION
PLATFORM

KHALISTAN

- WHEREAS The Young Republican National Federation is concerned about the violence in Khalistan, and
- WHEREAS The Indian government currently has at least 500,000 paramilitary and full combat forces deployed in Khalistan, and
- WHEREAS The denial of basic human rights continues under the current Indian government, and
- WHEREAS The Indian government has refused to allow internationally recognized human rights monitors such as Amnesty International within its borders to investigate atrocities, and
- WHEREAS Domestic human rights groups such as the Punjab Human Rights Organization, have fully documented the existence of Indian government death squads which indiscriminantly murder the Sikhs of Khalistan, and
- WHEREAS The Indian government has diverted water from Khalistan in direct violation of the internationally recognized riparian principle governing regional water rights, and
- WHEREAS The Indian constitution displays an undue prejudice against the Sikhs and having the effect of denying Sikhs their democratic, political rights, and
- WHEREAS Laws under the Indian constitution like the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) of 1985 have been called "disturbing" and "completely unacceptable" by members of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, and
- WHEREAS No representative of the Sikh nation has ever been a signatory to the Indian constitution, and
- WHEREAS Freedom is the birthright of all nations, now therefore
- BE IT RESOLVED: By the Young Republican National Federation that the Sikhs of Khalistan, like all peoples of all nations, have the right to independence; that the independence of Khalistan, as declared by the leadership of Sikh nation on October 7, 1987, should be honored by the Indian government with the immediate removal of all occupying forces from the soil of Khalistan; and that the Indian government should settle this matter peacefully by immediately sitting down with the leadership of the Sikh nation to demarcate the boundaries between India and Khalistan.

AP 06/27 1730 Would-Be Nations

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Croatia and Slovenia, constituent republics that have declared "independence" from Yugoslavia, are among a growing number of regions worldwide where nationalism is feeding a drive for sovereignty. Here's a brief look at some of them:

LITHUANIA -- The Supreme Council parliament declared the republic of 3.8 million independent on March 11, 1990. The Kremlin imposed an economic embargo of oil, natural gas and other raw materials in an effort to force the republic to back down on some of its laws that foster independence. The crackdown's bloodiest attack came on Jan. 13, when Soviet army troops and tanks stormed the Vilnius television broadcasting complex. Thirteen civilians and a KGB officer died.

ESTONIA -- The Estonian parliament on March 30, 1990, declared the Soviet Union an occupying power and pledged to restore full independence gradually. Soviet President Gorbachev at first offered Estonia, a republic of 1.5 million, "special status" in a revamped Soviet federation if it would drop its independence bid. They persisted, dropping the trappings of Soviet power and the words "Soviet Socialist" from its name, leaving "The Republic of Estonia." Gorbachev decreed that the Estonian declaration was illegal.

LATVIA -- The Latvian Supreme Soviet parliament declared independence May 4, 1990, but the measure called for a transition period of unspecified length. About 54 percent of the republic's population of 2.7 million is Latvian. The rest are mainly Russians, many of whom oppose independence. Like Estonia, Latvia first got an offer from Gorbachev of special status in a renewed federation, but its independence declaration amounted to a rejection of that offer. Presidential decrees declared the Latvian declaration invalid.

GEORGIA -- Georgia first declared independence on May 26, 1918, during the civil war that followed the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, but it was forcibly absorbed into the Soviet Union three years later. In the first direct presidential election in Soviet history, Georgia reasserted its independence on May 26, 1991. It is one of the six Soviet republics that have refused to sign Gorbachev's Union Treaty to hold the splintering nation together.

CROATIA -- Croatia is governed by the Croatian Democratic Union, a staunchly nationalist party that won last year's parliamentary elections. Its parliament declared independence from Yugoslavia this week. The party's leader, Franjo Tudjman, a former Communist general, was named president by the legislature. Ethnic Serbs, who claim discrimination, have declared independence for their enclave of Krajina in western Croatia. They have formed a separate government and have resisted efforts to re-establish Croatian authority in the area, which accounts for about a quarter of the state's territory.

SLOVENIA -- Slovenia is ruled by Demos, a coalition of six center-right parties that last year beat the reformed Communist Party in the first multiparty elections in 45 years. Milan Kucan, a former Communist, was elected president of the Yugoslav republic, which declared its independence from Belgrade this week.

ERITREA -- The ouster last month of Ethiopia's Marxist government by Eritrean and Tigrean rebels may pave the way for the independence of Eritrea, Ethiopia's northernmost province. Eritrea long has been coveted by foreign powers because of its strategic location on the Red Sea. Italy colonized the region in 1891. Allied armies took Eritrea in 1941 and for the next 11 years it was under British military administration. Eritrean leaders pushed for independence, but Ethiopia, needing access to the Red Sea, annexed the region. Eritrea's 3.5 million people speak nine languages and are divided between Moslems and Christians.

KURDISTAN -- The region that Kurds claim as their homeland lies across the Zagros mountains of Iran, the Taurus mountains of Turkey, the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, small parts of Syria and Soviet Armenia, and south across the Mesopotamian plain of Iraq. Kurds are traditionally Sunni Muslims. Split mainly between four nations -- Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria -- and often sub-divided into warring clans, the estimated 25 million Kurds seem no closer to winning a homeland than they were after World War I.

KHALISTAN -- Sikh militants in India, seeking to establish a separate nation in Punjab state, have been active since 1982. Sikhs comprise 2 percent of India's 844 million people, but they are in a majority in Punjab, a rich farming state. Sikhs claim their community is discriminated against by the Hindus, who represent 82 percent of the country's people. The Sikhs say that Khalistan, their hoped-for nation, would contain at least Punjab state.

TAMILS -- The Tamil campaign for independence from Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority began in 1983 and escalated into all-out war. Tamils, who seek autonomy in the north and east of Sri Lanka, believe that they are discriminated against by the Sinhalese. Tamils, who are predominantly Hindu, make up 18 percent of Sri Lanka's 16 million people. The Buddhist Sinhalese comprise 75 percent, while Muslims constitute 7 percent.

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 102^d CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1991

No. 127

KHALISTAN: THE ONLY SOLUTION

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 16, 1991

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the freedom of the Sikh nation. On October 7, 1987, the Sikh nation declared independence from India forming the separate country of Khalistan. I want to go on record as saying Khalistan is the only solution to the Punjab problem.

Under the oppression of the Indian Government, the Sikhs have suffered untold atrocities. Since 1984 over 100,000 Sikhs have been killed by Indian police, paramilitary forces, and death squads. At this very moment 15,000 Sikh prisoners of conscience languish in Indian prisons without charge or trial.

I quote a recent Asia Watch report:

Torture, extrajudicial murders, "encounter killings," rape, "disappearances," extortion, arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, the denial of freedom of press and expression, and the maintenance of internationally repudiated draconian laws are among the gross violations committed by the Indian Government and its forces.

The report adds that—

Throughout Punjab, torture is practiced systematically in police stations, in prisons and in detention camps used by the paramilitary forces. In virtually every case Asia Watch investigated, persons taken into custody were tortured.

Police are even given quotas by their superiors to kill a certain number of Sikhs each month. Mr. Speaker, can we honestly attach the good name of democracy to a country which terrorizes, tortures, and murders its own minorities?

The Sikh nation is fighting for its freedom and it needs the support of the U.S. Congress. I submit for the record a resolution passed by the National Federation of Young Republicans on July 13 urging the government of India to "remove all occupying forces from Khalistan and honor the independence of the Sikh nation."

I submit, as well, the Associated Press list of the world's 10 "Would-be Nations," on which Khalistan is listed. Today three of the

nations on the list—Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania—are independent, and three others—Slovenia, Croatia, and Georgia—are well on their way there. With the help of the international community Khalistan, too, will soon have its freedom.

I want to note that the drive to censure India for its violation of human rights is fast gaining international consensus. Both Germany and Norway, have moved to reduce aid to India. I have introduced a bill, the Human Rights in India Act (H.R. 953) which would terminate U.S. aid to India until the Indian Government allows internationally recognized human rights monitors within its borders to investigate atrocities. Amnesty International has been denied entry for this purpose since 1978. I beseech all my colleagues in the U.S. Congress to support this bill. India must receive the message that the world community will not tolerate its government by oppression. And we, the Members of the U.S. Congress, must take a leading role in creating a new world order in which freedom is the rule not the exception.

INDIA BLAMES NORWAY FOR GERMAN FOREIGN AID CUT

(By Narendra Taneja and Sverre Trandhagen)

India lays blame on Norway for the controversial plan to cut foreign aid to the country.

"Germany wants to reduce aid for exactly the same reason that Norway did earlier," claimed a high placed official in the Indian foreign department to Dagens Naeringsliv.

This awakened considerable irritation from the Indian authorities when they were informed last fall of the decision that Norwegian foreign aid would be drastically reduced.

Even though there is talk now of a cut of 35 million crowns in agricultural grants, from 140 million in 1990 to 105 million crowns in 1991, the Indians expressed strong concern of a "snowball effect" where other contributing countries follow Norway's example.

According to the German press, the federal ministry of economic cooperation (BMZ) in Bonn has now decided to reduce foreign aid to India by at least 25% starting next year. Germany's annual foreign aid has been around 365 million marks.

Foreign-Aid minister Grete Faremo is not overly convinced about the Indian accusations that Norway is responsible for German foreign aid cuts.



United States
of America

"I cannot accept such a premise. It is stretching it a bit to say that other countries will reduce their foreign aid because Norway has done it. But it is a fact that foreign aid funds are limited goods," says Paremo to Dagana Hæringstøl.

Underlying this is a Norwegian desire to give priority to Africa. This became apparent in the budget which Stryer's government presented, and has been continued under Paremo and the labor government.

A gradual 3-year scaling down of the agricultural program funds to India has been decided upon. Starting in 1993, there will be a change in foreign aid distribution, but it is not determined if India will be dropped as a main cooperating partner with Norway.

Even though Norwegian policy is mainly governed by the wish for a greater impact of foreign aid by to a greater extent concentrating on Africa, also India's expenditures on weaponry and atomic power had an influence.

The reason given for the German cut in aid is that India, which has more people than the entire African continent, has now done well, and the country has a high defense budget.

According to sources in the Indian foreign department, who didn't want to have their names revealed, the German decision now substantiates their statement warning Norway of the danger of a "snowball effect."

"The Norwegian decision was unfortunate and incorrect. Look how many countries now are following suit. Today it is Germany, tomorrow it can be Sweden. Soon the whole world will say that India doesn't need foreign aid," state Indian officials who claim that it is the Indian poor who are affected.

Indian authorities believe that the foreign aid funds are used effectively and also say that the defense budget is being reduced.

Former special adviser in the foreign department, Berni E. Lund (now ambassador in Namibia) was sent last September to India by foreign aid minister Tom Vraalsen to inform about the foreign aid cut. Lund said to Dagana Hæringstøl after the rather unpleasant trip that he didn't believe there would be any "snowball effect" from other contributing countries to India.

KHALISTAN

Whereas the Young Republican National Federation is concerned about the violence in Khalistan, and

Whereas the Indian government currently has at least 500,000 paramilitary and full combat forces deployed in Khalistan, and

Whereas the denial of basic human rights continues under the current Indian government, and

Whereas the Indian government has refused to allow internationally recognized human rights monitors such as Amnesty International within its borders to investigate atrocities, and

Whereas domestic human rights groups such as the Punjab Human Rights Organization, have fully documented the existence of Indian government death squads which indiscriminately murder the Sikhs of Khalistan, and

Whereas the Indian government has diverted water from Khalistan in direct violation of the internationally recognized riparian principle governing regional water rights, and

Whereas the Indian constitution displays an undue prejudice against the Sikhs and having the effect of denying Sikhs their democratic, political rights, and

Whereas laws under the Indian constitution like the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) of 1985 have

been called "disturbing" and "completely unacceptable" by members of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, and

Whereas no representative of the Sikh nation has ever been a signatory to the Indian constitution, and

Whereas freedom is the birthright of all nations now, therefore be it.

Resolved, by the Young Republican National Federation that the Sikhs of Khalistan, like all peoples of all nations, have the right to independence; that the independence of Khalistan, as declared by the leadership of Sikh nation on October 7, 1987, should be honored by the Indian government with the immediate removal of all occupying forces from the soil of Khalistan; and that the Indian government should settle this matter peacefully by immediately sitting down with the leadership of the Sikh nation to demarcate the boundaries between Indian and Khalistan.

(From New Dimensions, Sept.-Oct. 1991)
OPPRESSION OF THE SIKHS: THE UNFOUL STORY
(By Timothy B. McPharson)

Recently, the world has finally taken note of the long-suffering Kurdish people. But there is another "forgotten" people who have suffered tremendously in modern times—virtually without notice from the West. The Sikhs of India, who wear the turban traditional to their religion, believe in one God, individual liberty, abolition of the caste system, and civil liberties for all, regardless of race, creed, or sex. Yet the government of India, which bills itself as "the world's largest democracy," as systematically oppressed them.

Since 1948, 95,000 Sikhs have been killed by Indian government police, paramilitary forces, and death squads. Today, over 15,000 Sikhs languish in Indian jails without charge, trial, or access to legal counsel. Reportedly, they are made to endure some of the most brutal forms of torture known to man. Since early January, the Indian government has massed a military force of over 500,000 troops in Punjab, the Sikh homeland, enforcing an undeclared martial law of the Sikh people.

In addition, the Sikhs continue to suffer under the 1984 Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA), which according to Rep. Ben Blas (R, Guam), "permits the security forces to arrest and detain indefinitely anyone they arbitrarily decide is a terrorist. Yet to my knowledge," Blas reports, "no supposed Sikh terrorist has ever been brought to trial. Instead, they die in police custody or in . . . fake encounters."

To understand the hostility of Hindu India (or Hindustan, as many Sikhs and Kashmiri Muslims call it) toward the Sikh people, one must look to its history. When India was seeking its independence from Britain in 1947, Sikh political and military leaders were influential in that struggle along with the British, the Muslims (who received Pakistan), and the Hindus, League (which received India). Since Punjab is a rich agricultural region known as "the breadbasket of India," dia, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru felt that it was vital to keep the Sikhs within India. Accordingly, Nehru promised the Sikhs autonomy. "No law will be passed [which affects the Sikhs] without the approval of the Sikh people," Nehru is reported to have said. With this promise, the Sikhs took their place within India rather than opting for independence.

The promise was not kept. Rather, Presidential rule of the sort imposed in the Soviet Union has been imposed upon the

Sikhs nine times since India became independent. According to Rep. Dan Burton (R, Ind.), 30 to 35 Sikhs die in Punjab each day in extrajudicial (illegal) killings. To put an end to this cruel treatment, on October 7, 1987, Sikh leaders declared their independence, giving their new state the name Khalistan (meaning "Land of the Pure").

"Khalistan's declaration of independence is irrevocable, irreversible, and non-negotiable," says Dr. Gurmint Singh Aulakh, President of The Council of Khalistan which describes itself as "the organization leading the Sikh struggle for freedom." Yet in spite of their declared independence, the Sikhs have been living under continual Presidential rule for the last four years. "It is a disintegrating," adds Aulakh, "and the assassination of Mr. Gandhi has only accelerated the process. Gandhi was the victim of the violence he helped to sustain."

Last March, Simranjit Singh Mann, leader of the largest faction of the Akali Dal, the principal Sikh political party, declared Khalistan "an Indian colony" and urged Sikhs to move to Pakistan. Mann had earlier received a letter from the sarpanches (mayors) of six Sikh villages detailing a threat by an Indian army brigadier that his army would kill the sarpanches and all the village youth, then convert the women to army camps and "breed a new race." Mann called upon the U.S. to help the Sikhs achieve their independence. "The U.S. is our friend. We hope that they will come to our aid," said Mann.

In response, Rep. Burton and 44 co-sponsors introduced legislation known as the Human Rights in India Act (H.R. 953), that, in the words of Burton, "would cut off developmental aid to India until its government allows internationally recognized human rights groups within its borders to investigate the violation of human rights."

At present, the Human Rights in India Act is bottled up in the Near East and South Asia subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The subcommittee chairman, Rep. Steven Solaris (D, New York), has been described by some as "India's best friend in Congress," so the bill may have an uphill fight to get passed. A similar bill was rejected last year.

But Blas, other members of Congress, and several Sikh leaders are saying the same thing: "Khalistan is the only solution to the Punjab problem."

Croatia and Slovenia, constituent republics that have declared "independence" from Yugoslavia, growing number of regions worldwide where nationalism is feeding a drive for sovereignty. Here's a look at some of them:

LITHUANIA—The Supreme Council parliament declared the republic of 3.8 million independent on March 11, 1990. The Kremlin imposed an economic embargo of oil, natural gas and other raw materials in an effort to force the republic to back down on some of its laws that foster independence. The crackdown's bloodiest attack came on Jan. 13, when Soviet army troops and tanks stormed the Vilnius television broadcasting complex. Thirteen civilians and a KGB officer died.

ESTONIA—The Estonian parliament on March 30, 1990, declared the Soviet Union an occupying power and pledged to restore full independence gradually. Soviet President Gorbachev at first offered Estonia, a republic of 1.5 million, "special status" in a revamped Soviet federation if it would drop its independence bid. They persisted, dropping the trappings of Soviet power and the words "Soviet Socialist" from its name, leaving "The Republic of Estonia." Gorbachev

decided that the Estonian declaration was illegal.

Latvia.—The Latvian Supreme Soviet parliament declared independence May 4, 1960, but the measure called for a transition period of unspecified length. About 54 percent of the republic's population of 1.1 million is Latvian. The rest are mainly Russians, many of whom oppose independence. Like Estonia, Latvia first got an offer from Gorbachev of special status in a renewed federation, but its independence declaration amounted to a rejection of that offer. Presidential decrees declared the Latvian declaration invalid.

Georgia.—Georgia first declared independence on May 1918, during the civil war that followed the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, but it was forcibly absorbed into the Soviet Union three years later. In the first direct presidential election in Soviet history, Georgia reasserted its independence on May 26, 1991. It is one of the six Soviet republics that have refused to sign Gorbachev's Union Treaty to hold the splintering nation together.

Croatia.—Croatia is governed by the Croatian Democratic Union, a staunchly nationalist party that won last year's parliamentary elections. Its parliament declared independence from Yugoslavia this week. The party's leader, Franjo Tudjman, a former Communist general, was named president by the legislature. Ethnic Serbs, who claim discrimination, have declared independence for their enclave of Krajina in western Croatia. They have formed a separate government and have resisted efforts to re-establish Croatian authority in the area, which accounts for about a quarter of the state's territory.

Slovenia.—Slovenia is ruled by Demos, a coalition of six center-right parties that last year beat the reformed Communist Party in the first multiparty elections in 43 years. Milan Kucan, a former Communist, was elected president of the Yugoslav republic, which declared its independence from Belgrade this week.

Eritrea.—The outer last month of Ethiopia's Marxist government by Eritrean and Tigrean rebels may pave the way for the independence of Eritrea, Ethiopia's northernmost province. Eritrea long has been coveted by foreign powers because of its strategic location on the Red Sea. Italy colonized the region in 1891. Allied armies took Eritrea in 1941 and for the next 11 years it was under British military administration. Eritrean leaders pushed for independence, but Ethiopia, needing access to the Red Sea, annexed the region. Eritrea's 3.5 million people speak nine languages and are divided between Moslems and Christians.

Kurdistan.—The region that Kurds claim as their homeland lies across the Zagros mountains of Iran, the Taurus mountains of Turkey, the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, small parts of Syria and Soviet Armenia, and south across the Mesopotamian plain of Iraq. Kurds are traditionally Sunni Muslims. Split mainly between four nations—Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria—and often sub-divided into warring clans, the estimated 25 million Kurds seem no closer to winning a homeland than they were after World War I.

Kashmir.—Sikh militants in India, working to establish a separate nation in Punjab state, have been active since 1982. Sikhs comprise 2 percent of India's 844 million people, but they are in a majority in Punjab, a rich farming state. Sikhs claim their community is discriminated against by the Hindus, who represent 82 percent of the country's people. The Sikhs say that Khalistan, their hoped-for nation, would contain at least Punjab state.

Tamil.—The Tamil campaign for independence from Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority began in 1963 and escalated into all-out war. Tamils, who seek autonomy in the north and east of Sri Lanka, believe that they are discriminated against by the Sinhalese. Tamils, who are predominantly Hindu, make up 18 percent of Sri Lanka's 16 million people. The Buddhist Sinhalese comprise 75 percent, while Muslims constitute 7 percent.

COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN, Washington, DC, April 27, 1992.

ASIA WATCH SOUNDS INDIA FOR OPPRESSION OF
SIKHS—INDIAN GOVERNMENT EXPOSED
FOR BRUTAL VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Asia Watch, a division of the American based Human Rights Watch, released on August 23 a blistering 138 page report, Human Rights in India: Punjab in Crisis, documenting massive violations of human rights by Indian police, paramilitary and security forces.

Torture, extrajudicial murders, "encounter killings," rape, "disappearances," extortion, arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, the denial of freedom of press and expression, and the maintenance of internationally repudiated draconian laws are among the gross violations committed by the Indian government and its forces.

Encounter killings continue to be the Indian government's primary means of suppressing the Sikh nation. According to an Asia Watch press release issued with the report:

"Asia Watch investigated many cases of extrajudicial killings of Sikhs by the security forces in staged 'encounters' in which the police allege that they came under attack by militants. In most cases, however, the victims have simply been murdered in police custody. In some cases, the police have actually recruited and trained and trained extrajudicial forces to carry out these killings. Detainees have also frequently 'disappeared' in police custody; police frequently have defied court orders and thwarted efforts to locate detainees and produce them in court. The police also seized local newspapers and harassed journalists."

The report adds that:

"Throughout Punjab, torture is practiced systematically in police stations, in prisons and in detention camps used by the paramilitary forces. In virtually every case Asia Watch investigated, persons taken into custody were tortured."

"During house to house searches, the security forces routinely assault and threaten civilians. In some cases, virtually all the male residents of entire villages have been subjected to beatings and other forms of assault."

Despite the preposterousness of such brutality, "no member of the security forces in Punjab has been convicted of any human rights violation committed in the state," Asia Watch verified.

Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council Khalistan stressed that "over 100,000 Sikhs have been killed by Indian government forces since 1984 without any action taken against those responsible. Can anybody honestly refer to the Indian government as the so-called 'world's largest democracy'? It is not a democracy. It's nothing less than the world's largest tyranny."

While criminal acts by security forces should clearly be condemned, ultimate culpability for the oppression the Sikh nation faces today rest on the shoulders of the highest tiers of the Indian political structure. Asia Watch reports:

"Central government politicians under the Congress (I), National Front, and Janata Dal (BJ) administrations have given blanket authority to the police and paramilitary forces in Punjab to act outside the law. As a result, these forces have engaged in gross and systematic human rights abuses. . . . The corruption endemic to the Indian police system has also played its part. Police have routinely detained, tortured and killed persons in pursuit of bribery and extortion. By failing to prosecute members of its security forces responsible for such abuses, or even to acknowledge that abuses have taken place, the Indian government has effectively condoned these practices."

According to its press release, Asia Watch is "the first international group to carry out a fact-finding mission in the (Punjab)." Amnesty International has been denied access by the Indian government since 1978. That organization, however, has a mandate in its charter dictating that it must first gain the approval of governments before it conducts formal investigations. Asia Watch has no such stipulation in its charter.

Dr. Aulakh, praised the report as a milestone in the struggle for the freedom of the Sikh nation, which declared its independence on October 7, 1987 forming the separate country of Khalistan in the face of overwhelming Indian government oppression. "Asia Watch has now validated what Sikhs have been trying to bring before the international community for the past decade," he said. "India is the worst violator of human rights in the world at this time. The only solution is outright independence. Freedom, after all, is the most essential human right. Without it we cannot expect to survive in a manner acceptable by civilized standards. Either we achieve freedom or we remain the slaves of the Indian government."

As for the involvement of the international community, Dr. Aulakh sees its role as crucial. "After this report, the United States and the other donor nations will have to make a very important decision: will they or will they not terminate aid and Most Favored Nations trading status for India? The decision is obvious. Germany has already made clear its intention to condition aid to human rights and weapons spending. Because India will not respect the freedoms of the Sikhs, it's going to see quite a bit more of this sort of pressure. The Indian government will soon learn that it cannot simply terrorize an entire nation and get away with it."

Though various Indian governments have long promised a resolution to the situation in the Punjab, every solemn commitment made to the Sikh nation has been broken. After quite some time, the extermination of tens of thousands of Sikhs by the torture, rape, extortion, disappearance, and humiliation of many more, the international community is now beginning to see the reality of the situation. It knows that the Sikh nation has been betrayed at every juncture. As Asia Watch reports, the new government under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao offers only more of the same.

"His government, like the two that preceded it, is a minority government, one that may find itself preoccupied with its own survival to diverge from established policy in Punjab. If that is the case, it will be tragic for Punjab and India."

The situation in the Sikh homeland is extremely grim, but as Dr. Aulakh has promised, "the Sikh nation will not rest until it can back in the brilliant glow of freedom." The only solution to this problem is independence for the Sikh nation. The entire world looks to the Indian government and wonders if it has yet received this message.

FORUM

Geyer pinpoints the wrong culprit

India's descent into political chaos isn't exactly news. The question is when and how India began to fall apart. It wasn't the demise of the Gandhi dynasty, as some say, which put India on the road to ruin, but rather that dynasty's existence. Indira Gandhi planted the seeds of criminality in Indian politics that came to bloom during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi. It is against this backdrop that various peoples under Indian rule have suffered unheard of brutality and that they struggle for full independence.

Georgie Anne Geyer's attempt in "India's descent to political chaos," Sept. 12, to define the Sikh and Kashmiri independence movements as little more than the activity of criminal gunrunners and drug dealers is a disinformational red herring and serves to absolve the Indian government responsibility for countless atrocities committed against its minority populations. Miss Geyer's tendency to rely on Indian government functionaries and Hindus for her information, while ignoring the views of Sikhs and Kashmiris, is disturbing.

There is, of course, a reason why she may find it difficult, at least in India, to interview such persons. The police state apparatus established by Mr. Gandhi has forced underground all opposition in Punjab and Kashmir. Col. Partap Singh was one such voice. When he established the party for Sikh freedom (the Khalsa Raj Party), he was charged with treason and was forced to escape. He came to America. Is this what we can call democracy?

Or take the case of Sikh Nationalist member of parliament Jagdev Singh Khudian. In December 1989, it was merely rumored he would soon make an announcement in full support of Khalistan, the independent Sikh state. Six days later, his body was found in a canal near his Punjab village. Indian police called it suicide, but an autopsy revealed Mr. Khudian died of blows to the abdomen. Did he punch himself to death? Was this Indian democracy at work?

Findings by various human rights groups shed more light on the subject. On May 10, Amnesty International reported that "well over 10,000 Sikhs are being held in (Punjab) without any chance of even getting a trial." On Aug. 25, Asia Watch added: "Virtually everyone detailed in Punjab is tortured."

Asia Watch goes on to say that human rights monitors from that organization "investigated many cases of extrajudicial killings of Sikhs by the security forces in staged 'encounters' in which the police allege they came under attack by militants. In most cases, however, the victims have simply been murdered in police custody. In some cases, the police have actually recruited and trained extrajudicial forces to carry out these killings."

This sort of criminality has been institutionalized within the Indian political system. Even now, Congress Party thugs who instigated the 1984 anti-Sikh massacres, in which thousands of Sikhs were killed, have escaped all prosecution. On Sept. 1, 1990, a team of investigators from India's Central Bureau of Investigation went to the house of Sajjan Kumar, former Congress Party member of parliament, to arrest him for his part in the massacres. Apparently, Mr. Kumar is above the law. According to the New York Times (Oct. 1, 1990), the CBI investigators "were attacked by gangs and thugs" from the roof of Mr. Kumar's house and had to retreat. To this day, Mr. Kumar remains a free man.

Even the very statutes allowed to exist under the Indian constitution reveal the criminal status of those in the Indian government who call themselves "politicians" and "civil servants." In 1985, the Indian parliament passed the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, which strips the defendant of all rights. The presumption of innocence is reversed to a presumption of guilt, and one can be detained for up to two years without even being charged with a crime. The U.N. Human Rights Commission called these laws disturbing and completely unacceptable. In addition, the so-called "world's largest democracy" has refused to sign the U.N. Covenant Against Torture and

other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment — a document to which more than 80 nations currently are party.

The Sikhs and Kashmiris have known for years the Indian government is India's worse element.

DR. GURMIT SINGH AULAKH

President
Council of Khalistan
Washington

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1991

The Washington Times

REDRAWING THE MAP

Countries joining United Nations since 1980

1980 — Zimbabwe, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

1981 — Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Vanuatu.

1983 — St. Kitts and Nevis.

1984 — Brunei.

1990 — Namibia, Liechtenstein.

1991 — Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, North Korea, South Korea, Micronesia, Marshall Islands.

Possible future nations:

Quebec — from Canada

Eritrea — from Ethiopia

Kurdistan — from Iraq, Iran and Turkey

Palestine — from Israel-occupied West Bank and Gaza

Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia — from Yugoslavia.

Slovakia — from Czechoslovakia

Punjab — from India

Baluchistan — from Pakistan

East Timor — from Indonesia

Tibet — from China

Russia, and 10 other republics — from Soviet Union

Southern Sudan — from Sudan

Zanzibar — from Tanzania

The Washington Times