



November 3, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: 30th Anniversary of Anti-Sikh Attacks in India

Dear President Obama:

This week marks the 30th anniversary of the November 1984 anti-Sikh massacres in India. At least 3,000 Sikhs were killed throughout India in the span of just three days. Although various government commissions found that some police and Congress Party officials instigated or were complicit in attacks, the primary architects of this violence have escaped justice.

We are writing to urge the Obama administration to call on India's new government to bring justice to the victims of the 1984 massacres by prosecuting those responsible.

Given the important role that India is poised to play, and is increasingly seeking, in setting international policy—potentially as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council—we urge you to address impunity for the 1984 premeditated violence in your engagement with India. Only 30 people have been convicted for these crimes, with police and prosecutorial authorities failing to bring government and party officials allegedly involved to justice.

Eyewitnesses, journalists, and human rights professionals have compiled information showing that the scale of the violence was matched by its planning, precision, and brutality. Assailants used electoral records to identify Sikh homes, businesses, and places of worship for looting and arson attacks. Sikh men were beaten with iron rods and doused in kerosene before being burned alive. The attackers placed tires on the necks of some of their victims before setting them on fire. Gangs raped and sexually assaulted Sikh women, in some cases in front of their children. Sikh Gurdwaras (Houses of Worship) were targeted in arson attacks and Sikh articles of worship desecrated.

The organized massacres followed the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two of her Sikh bodyguards on Oct. 31, 1984. However, the entire Sikh community was targeted in retribution, while the Delhi police largely did nothing to protect them. Although the government promptly convicted and executed those responsible for conspiring Gandhi's assassination, it has allowed most of those responsible for the anti-Sikh violence to elude prosecution, owing to flawed investigations, intimidation of witnesses, and the destruction and suppression of evidence by police

officials. Some of those implicated served in government positions while survivors lived in fear. Although India's former prime minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh—himself a Sikh—tendered an apology for the 1984 massacres, he refused to accept state responsibility or make a commitment to justice. India's failure to deliver justice for these events reflects an abdication of moral responsibility on the part of successive governments from different parties, and undercuts India's claims that it respects human rights and the rule of law.

In our increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, governments should engage with each other constructively to promote human rights for all and ensure accountability for mass state crimes. As the world's largest democracy, India has a critical role to play in upholding these standards. In this context, we urge the Obama administration, especially the U.S. Department of State, to make human rights a priority in our nation's continuing engagement with India and to call upon the government to deliver justice to those who lost their lives, their dignity, or their loved ones during the November 1984 anti-Sikh massacres.

Respectfully submitted,

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