

Conflict Resolution and Self-Determination
The Indo-Sikh Conflict
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Respected Members of Parliament and the Lords

I would like to start by thanking 'Parliamentarians for National Self-Determination', in particular, Chairman Lord Nazir Ahmad, for your kind invitation to come from the Sikh homeland to speak at the Mother of Parliaments. I am also aware that esteemed representatives from a number of liberation movements from around the world are participating in this international conference, who may be wondering how someone by the name of Peer-Mohamad comes here today to represent the Sikh struggle for Independence, or Khalistan?!

So I will continue by way of explanation. I hail from a village in the Sikh homeland, Punjab, which before Indian independence, went by the name of Peer-Mohamad and this was a Muslim village. One of the great tragedies of that Independence was that a colonial power, the British, oversaw the biggest episode of ethnic cleansing the world has ever witnessed by declaring Indian independence even before anybody knew where the boundaries of India were drawn, resulting in a massive panic, transfer of populations and loss of life – mainly Sikh, since the boundary, it turned out, bisected the Sikh homeland.

If the British role was less than glorious, not least because they owed it to the Sikhs to return the homeland that they had snatched from them, it would be wrong to blame them entirely. To some extent, Sikh naivety, but mainly Indian duplicity played the key role. India promised the Sikhs 'the glow of freedom' in their homeland before partition, but then prime minister Nehru said 'the situation had changed' when called upon to deliver, afterwards. This inevitably sparked the beginning of the Sikh independence struggle.

Peaceful political agitations that followed were further fuelled by India's dissolution of Sikh principalities, refusal to grant language rights, confiscation of riparian and territorial resources, and denial even of separate entity status under the Indian constitution. All of this is well documented, but the important point here is that it will resonate not only among the different freedom struggles represented here today but also the unfolding events in the Ukraine.

As we are all too aware, matters came to a head 30 years ago in 1984, when Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi with the clandestine support of Margaret Thatcher and the Soviets, and overtly from the right wing forces of Hindutva in India, much vaunted to

regain power in the current general election, decided upon the infamous military action at the Golden Temple and 36 other Gurdwaras, in order to silence the Sikhs forever.

Of course, we also know, that the military action spectacularly backfired- it was the Indian prime minister, her army chief of staff and her parties' genocidal dictator in Punjab, who were forever silenced in the months and years of the aftermath. This time the Sikhs were not so naive, the Indians gave up on duplicity and showed their true colors, but the British government of the time still somehow managed to share in the blame for the Sikh holocaust that unfolded as well.

History may come to remark on how the women prime ministers of India and the UK managed to so alienate the Sikh and Scottish peoples, who's troops had so staunchly defended these countries for decades, that these peoples subsequently sought outright independence.

However, the similarities end there. In stark contrast, while the Scottish Nation is being allowed to peaceably vote for its independence, the Sikhs have suffered more deaths at the hands of the Indian state than even recent conflicts in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan.

All this, as a price merely for initially seeking autonomy in the form of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, and then in the face of genocide, independence in the form of the Panthic Committee Declaration as per the binding Sarbat Khalsa or National Assembly of Sikhs in 1986, both of which are inalienable rights under the UN Charter.

Today, the Sikh Nation cannot even get release for hundreds of political prisoners such as Bhai Balwant Singh Rajoana or Prof. Devinderpal Singh Bhullar, languishing for decades in Indian jails, despite impressive international campaigns for their release from death row, supported by the PNSD and others in the UK.

Ironically, it was the former of these who brought about the fragile cessation of hostilities in Punjab, while the latter was wrongly deported by a German judge who has since admitted his terrible mistake. The release of political and war prisoners as per the Geneva Convention, must therefore be a pre-condition for any serious attempt at resolution of the Indo-Sikh conflict. Only these leaders still have the credibility among Sikhs to negotiate on their behalf.

By contrast all 3 main political parties in Punjab have been complicit in the genocide of the Sikhs over the last 30 years, something which, like the late Margaret Thatcher they have inadvertently admitted, by shamelessly accusing each other of the same during the current general election campaign.

So the only interest that the Sikhs have in the totally corrupt electoral process in India, is to hope that by some chance, a humane and farsighted leadership emerges in Dehli, perhaps from within the newly formed anti-corruption AAP with whom the Sikhs, Kashmiris, Nagas and other independent movements can negotiate in good faith. Sadly, this may not happen any time soon.

As for the British government, it seems to have a special talent for tarnishing its own credibility, in the eyes of the Sikhs. Its foreign policy with regard to the Indo-Sikh conflict has hardly changed in the last 30 years. If anything, it is worse. Apart from continuing to alienate the ¾ million Sikhs here, the alternative for the UK may not be without serious consequences, if absurdly, it continues to officially deny any conflict, having been caught red handed on the side of the aggressor.

While the present government may claim difficulty in establishing the right form of enquiry into what happened 30 years ago, there is nothing to stop it from changing its foreign policy to one that is ethically rather than economically based.

We have already witnessed how one Security Council member, Soviet Russia, collapsed under the weight of its own inhumanity. We may look forward to a prospective member, India, going the same way soon. Sikhs and others world-wide may wonder, whether, if Scotland becomes independent later this year, and with events in Ukraine continuing to spiral out of control, if even Britain or Russia, and never mind India have the moral, legal or political authority to remain permanent members of the UN Security Council. The ownership of nuclear weapons alone is not a sufficient qualification for UN Security Council membership.

The world powers cannot continue to try to impose their will to serve their own interests'. It is high time that the UN collectively, and not Security Council members individually, asserted themselves to once more stand by UN articles, principles and resolutions. Beginning with Article 1, guaranteeing the right of self-determination to all peoples, would be the logical place to start.

At the same time, however, indictment of war criminals by the International Criminal Court is a must, particularly when such people continue to enjoy high office in countries like India and Sri Lanka, underlining the irrelevance of the judicial process in these failed states.

From the Sikh perspective, It would also be a serious opportunity missed for the ICC if, for example, the likes of KPS Gill, KS Brar, Sajjan Kumar and others, died of natural causes under Indian protection, without even being indicted.