



A Report of the
Human Rights Advisory Group of the

Panjabis In Britain All Party Parliamentary Group

The November 1984 Anti-Sikh Pogroms

Twenty Years on - A call for action

November 2004

The November 1984 Anti-Sikh Pogroms

This briefing paper sets out, by reference to reputable sources, an account of how thousands of innocent Sikhs were horrifically massacred, tortured, raped, beaten, and burnt alive during the pogroms carried out in Delhi and other Indian cities in November, 1984. There is overwhelming and documented evidence of state involvement in the preparation and execution of the killings. Those guilty and responsible for this outrage remain unpunished till this day.

This briefing document includes detailed case-studies illustrating the barbarity of the crimes committed, and how these harrowing events were made possible by the acquiescence and direct involvement of the state. Witness testimonies have enabled the identification of those allegedly responsible for organizing these atrocities, including senior politicians, security personnel and civil authorities. However, almost all of those identified have escaped prosecution, despite international pressure to punish the guilty.

India, November 1984: What happened?

On 31st October 1984, two of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Sikh bodyguards assassinated her in an act of retribution following the full scale military assault on the Golden Temple Complex in Amritsar, an operation that she had ordered in June of that year. This unprecedented military action had resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent Sikhs and the destruction of the Akal Takht, the centre of Sikh sovereignty and temporal power.

In the three days following the assassination of Indira Gandhi, marauding mobs of Hindus, orchestrated by the then ruling Congress Party in collusion with the police, killed thousands of Sikh men, women and children, and burned and looted hundreds of Sikh homes, businesses and places of worship. The official death count in Delhi alone, over this 72 hour period, stands at 2,733. Figures from enquiry commission reports based on affidavits filed (5,015) put the death toll in Delhi as nearer 6,000 (approximately one murder every 40 seconds). Countless others were killed across India, primarily in Congress Party ruled states; in all the total death toll has been estimated as being well in excess of 10,000.

Now, twenty years later, following the killing of thousands of innocent Sikhs, the guilty continue to remain unpunished (only six persons are serving sentences for murder, Express India 2001). The principal instigators and those identified as actively colluding in the anti-Sikh pogroms rather than facing jail remain at large with many holding high office in Government and Civil Administration. Many victims continue to live in 'emergency' camps set up in 1984 without compensation. In total 50,000 Sikhs in one of the major capitals of the world were made homeless.

Soon after the 1984 killings, several authoritative accounts were published by local human rights groups. Amongst these, non-Sikh human rights activists brought out a book "Who are the guilty?" To this day it remains one of the most authentic accounts. In addition, several commissions of enquiry were set up and have reported. These accounts and reports examine different aspects of the circumstances which led to the massacres, contain interviews with scores of people and analyse numerous official and unofficial reports and documents. Some of their key findings are summarised in the following section.

The Key Features of Eye Witness Accounts of the November 1984 “riots”

1. “The Prime Minister’s assassination was seized upon as an opportune psychological pretext by those bent on exploiting the tension for political and material gains, to trigger off a massive, deliberate, planned onslaught on the life, property, and honor of a comparatively small, but easily identifiable minority community.” - Chief Justice Sikri
2. “Two lessons can be drawn from the experience of the Delhi riots. One is about the extent of criminalisation of our politics and the other about the utter unreliability of our police force in a critical situation.” - Retired Supreme Court Justice V.M. Tarkunde
3. The Tarkunde Report states, “There is evidence that in several areas local Congress (I) leaders held meetings on the night of October 31, and these preceded the attacks and killings of the Sikhs... the Congress (I) ring leaders paid Rs. 1000 to each killer; as boasted by the killers themselves who invariably used to be heavily drunk before killing.”
4. Killing, looting, and burning of the Sikhs and their property occurred in every Congress Party ruled state except in the Sikh majority state of Punjab, where hundreds of thousands of army personnel were stationed. [Findings of Punjab Human Rights Organisation – evidence given by Justice Ajit Singh Bains, Chairman PHRO, to HRAG, Nov 2003]
5. Sikh places of worship were sought out to be destroyed and Sikh religious texts and literature, including sacred scriptures were defecated upon. [source: Misra Commission]
6. There were two phases to the operation and rioting in New Delhi:
 1. Phase 1- spreading of false propaganda against the Sikhs by the police to raise the levels of fear and hate against the Sikhs and make the atrocities against them seem acceptable.
 2. Phase 2- Bringing of groups of armed men to at least ten different sections of New Delhi. After this phase, the government allowed the situation to get out of control for over two days before putting an end to the rioting and pogroms.

[source: Who are the Guilty?]
7. Police not only stood aside and watched as people were killed, but actively participated in the looting and killing and even disarmed and killed those Sikhs who were trying to defend themselves. [source: Who are the Guilty?]
8. Entire Sikh families were destroyed; the men were killed and the women gang raped. [see Appendix 1]
9. Large numbers of Sikhs were made to pay to get themselves shaven or face death. [source: Who are the Guilty?]

10. The police drove around in jeeps equipped with loudspeakers not only spreading false propaganda (that train loads of dead Hindu bodies were arriving and that Sikhs were poisoning Delhi's water supply), but also telling the Sikhs that they should go to their houses (setting them up for sure destruction) and that the police could no longer assure their safety. [source: Who are the Guilty?]
11. Women survivors told of how their children were ripped apart, the men and boys made to cut their hair, and the women raped. Then the men and boys were beaten up and burnt alive. [source: Who are the Guilty?]
12. Sikh passengers on buses and trains were stopped at the station, dragged outside and either thrown on the tracks or burnt. [source: Who are the Guilty?]
13. Although the number of dead will never be truly known, the serious estimates range between six thousand [Khushwant Singh] dead in Delhi alone and 12, 000 to 20, 000 dead Sikhs nationwide, with violence in Bihar and other states topped only by the carnage in Delhi. [source: The Sikhs in History by *Sangat Singh*]
14. Upon arrival at Palam airport in Delhi and hearing of his mother's assassination, Rajiv Gandhi told those present, "My mother has been shot dead. What are you doing here? Go, and take revenge. No turban (distinctive Sikh headdress) should be seen." [source: The Sikhs in History by *Sangat Singh* (talks on November 1, 1984 with a RAW inspector who was present at the airport)]
15. A large percentage of the mob was brought from outside the locality (the Delhi neighborhoods where the rioting took place) and were transported in vehicles. "In the areas which were most affected... the mobs were led by local Congress (I) politicians." the areas that were affected and had the largest concentration of looters were strong bases of the Congress (I) and were the "...network through which masses are mobilised for demonstration of Congress (I)'s ostensible popular support." [source: Who are the Guilty?]
16. The Sikhs in the Delhi police force (20% of the force) were withdrawn and the Sikh soldiers in Delhi were disarmed and confined to barracks. [source: The Sikhs in History by *Sangat Singh*]
17. Even after repeated pleas by various opposition (non- Congress (I)) members of Parliament to Home Minister (Narasimha Rao, who subsequently was elected as Prime Minister of India) to bring in the army to help restore peace, no action was taken to restore peace until November 3, the day of Gandhi's funeral and also the day many foreign dignitaries would be in Delhi for the funeral. [source: Who are the Guilty?]
18. Some politicians not only gave information about the Sikhs, but reportedly offered rewards such as 100 rupees and a bottle of liquor to everyone in the mobs. [source: Who are the Guilty?]

Punishment of the Guilty?

The indiscriminate killing of individuals and the violence directed against a particular community with the apparent complicity of Government machinery have continued to haunt the Indian polity. The saga of commissions and committees set up to determine the causes, consequences, deaths, prosecutions, compensation and disciplinary action relating to the 1984 carnage began that year and continues to this day, but the guilty remain unpunished. The latest of these is the Justice Nanavati Commission appointed in July 2000 by the Central Government after recognizing the ‘whitewash’ of the original Misra Commission. This is the second commission of inquiry into the 1984 massacre constituted under the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952.

After 20 years and 10,000 affidavits, the Nanavati Commission remains to be concluded (with yet another extension of time given to it in November 2004). This Commission had only managed to see 15 witnesses by July 2001. The limited scope of previous commissions and committees, some recommending the registration of some 1000 cases to be brought to court (Jain-Aggarawal Committee), the probing of the role of some 72 police officers (Kapoor-Mittal Committee), and three Congress Party Leaders (Narula Committee) remain unimplemented. The People’s Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and Peoples Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), in their report titled “Who are the Guilty?” identify 198 local Congress-I activists, 15 Congress-I Leaders, and 143 police officials. The identified individuals have not been brought to justice.

The instigation of communal frenzy and the commission of mass murder cannot be ignored or excused. The persons who killed, burned or looted as well as the minds that engineered or conspired to arrange these events must be brought to justice.

Latest Statements from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International

On 30th October 2004, Human Rights Watch issued a statement which urged the current Indian Government to make a public commitment to prosecute the planners and implementers of the violence. Brad Adams, their Asia Director, said

“Seven government-appointed commissions have investigated these attacks. But the commissions were all either whitewashes or they met with official stonewalling and obstruction. The time for commissions that do not lead to prosecutions is over. After two decades, the prosecutors and police should act. There is more than enough evidence to do so now”.

[http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/10/30/india9580_txt.htm]

This international concern was also evident in an Amnesty International statement also issued on the 20th anniversary of the pogroms. That statement calls on the Indian Government to end impunity for the perpetrators of the pogroms and to ensure that they are instead brought to justice. It says that

“until justice is delivered to victims and their families their wounds will remain open”

[AI Index@ASA20/99/2004 (Public) 29/10/04]

Pre-planned?

There is also evidence that the Delhi “riots” were pre-planned well in advance, and planned for 8th November. The collusion of government leaders and the police, the ready provision of address lists to rioters of Sikh homes and businesses, supplying mobs with arms and kerosene, the absence of the army for three days including returning to barracks of Sikh army personnel present in Delhi, and the active participation in the looting, burning and killing spree of Congress Party leaders. This evidence has been found not by Sikh activists, but by groups such as People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) led by Justice V.M. Tarkunde, former Chief Justice S. M. Sikri, and other Indians who are concerned with the growing undemocratic action of the so-called "world's largest democracy".

The wider Human Rights situation in India

Human rights violations and atrocities continue to occur in the Panjab after the 1984 pogrom.

- The bloody conflict in the Indian State of Punjab drew to a close in 1993; it is variously estimated that between 150,000 and 200,000 Sikhs have been killed in India since the Punjab conflict began in 1984.
- The murder of the Jathedar of the Akal Takht Gurdev Singh Kaunke (the most senior personage in the Sikh Religion) in police custody is an example of a policy of extra-judicial killing of political leaders. The findings of the enquiry set up to investigate this murder have not been made public.
- “Disappearances” in Punjab have been used to eliminate political dissent and tens of thousands of lives have been lost in a “dirty war” waged in the name of ‘law and order’. On September 6, 1995, the General Secretary of the Akali Dal Human Rights Wing, Jaswant S. Khalra (who had documented several thousands of “unclaimed” bodies of Sikh men at cremation sites throughout Punjab) was abducted by the Punjab police and was tortured and killed while in custody, despite international requests for access to ensure his safety.
- The Indian Government has publicly pursued a policy of immunity for the police and other security forces in their activities in the Punjab and elsewhere in the name of national security. Amnesty International’s report of Jan 2003 has castigated this policy by the Indian Government as illegal in international law and has called on other states to consider taking direct legal action against those guilty of human rights violations. To this day, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture as well as internationally reputed human rights organizations are denied access to Punjab in an attempt to conceal the large scale abuses from the international community.

Concluding Remarks

The Human Rights Advisory Group (HRAG), an advisory group to the Punjabis in Britain All Party Parliamentary Group, has considered the large body of material referred to in this briefing paper, worked with the British Sikh community and consulted directly with leading human rights organizations both in India and internationally, in order to prepare this report. Our meetings, held in the House of Commons, Westminster, have been contributed to by a wide range of concerned organizations and individuals. We thank all those who have contributed.

The Human Rights Advisory Group extends its deepest sympathies to the victims and their families. In their memory we have undertaken this work and pledge to continue the campaign for justice. In that regard we recommend the following measures be taken by the international community:

- A UN investigation should be set up to investigate the persistent failure of successive Indian Governments to ensure the prosecution those alleged to be responsible for the killings and destruction. That UN initiative should require the Indian authorities to
 - Take action against those responsible including proportionate criminal sanctions
 - Ensure that the victims (or their families) are adequately compensated and provided for.
- Appropriate sanctions (trade and diplomatic) should be applied, both by the UN and by individual states, in case of default by the Indian authorities in relation to these UN requirements.
- All Governments should ensure that those reportedly responsible for these gross human rights violations are denied entry to their respective States until such time they have been subjected to the due processes of investigation and criminal proceedings. Failure to do this will encourage a sense of impunity for the perpetrators. If any such persons are found to have entered the territory of any State, consideration should be given to prosecuting those persons under applicable local and international law.
- Threats of violence and intimidation against those championing the rights of the victims and their families and seeking prosecution of the guilty should be roundly condemned. The international community must require India to secure the safety of human rights defenders so that justice can be done.

The Human Rights Advisory Group will seek the support of the British Government to take a lead in the international arena to progress the above action points and recommendations.

Principal References

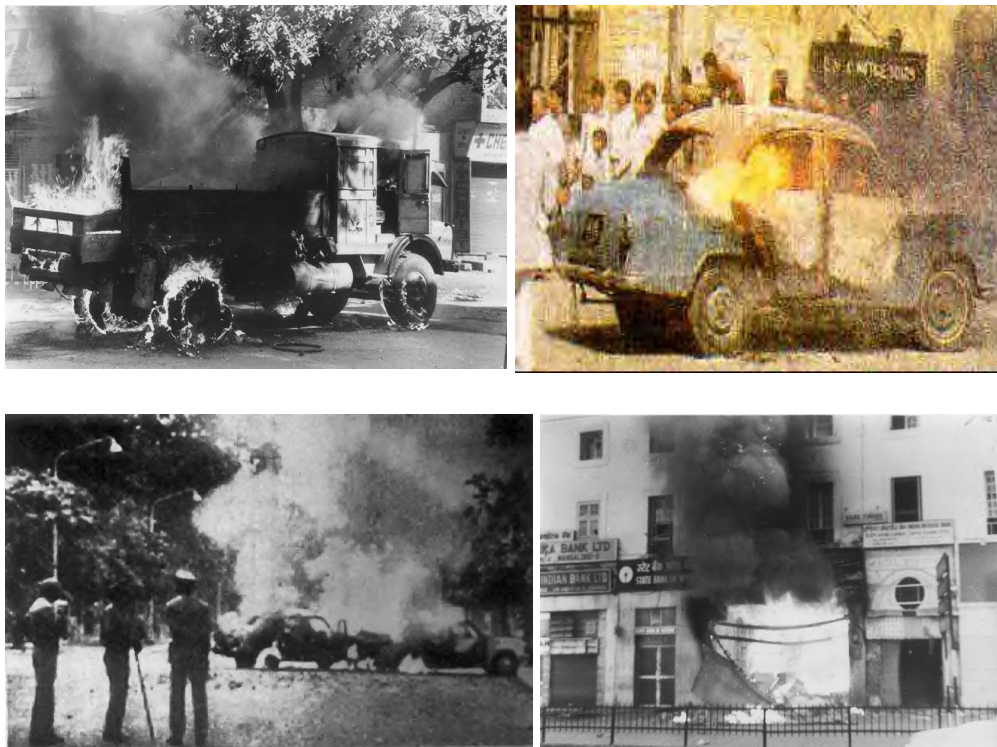
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12. Report on Kashmir, Physicians for Human Rights, 1995
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The following pages show graphic images taken during the three days of carnage. These images are followed by Appendix 1 which contains selected case histories drawn from the various reports prepared by the commissions of enquiry set up to investigate the pogroms and reports from human rights activists.

Death and Destruction: Organised 'rioting' across the capital with attacks on Sikh temples and property. Sikhs were murdered in their homes and as they traveled in taxis, buses and trains.



Pictures graphically show examples of arson and police inactivity



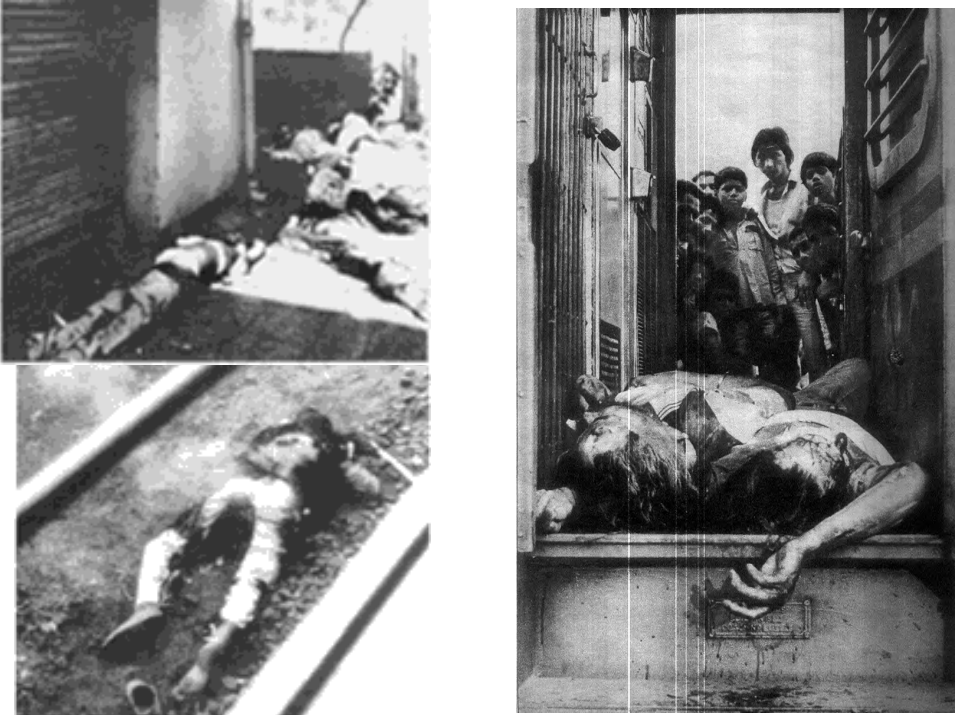
A large mob armed with sticks, poles, and kerosene walk past a Sikh man who is burning alive.



Sikh men killed on the streets of the capital – one Sikh was killed every 40 seconds over the 3 days.



October 31st - November 3rd 1984; Sikh men tracked down and killed on the spot



....and how the remains of dead Sikhs were left on the streets in early November 1984.



One of the many relief camps that sprang up directly after the violence. These camps were inadequate at best, were cramped and unhygienic, and lacked the basic medical treatment, food, and clothing for those in need.



The pictures below show some of the survivors of the anti-Sikh pogroms. Extensive head injuries can be seen in most cases - the elderly, young and women were not spared.



Sikh women grieve at the loss of their fathers, husbands, and sons.



Districts of Delhi after three days of unchecked murder and violence



Appendix 1 : Individual Cases based on Witness Testimonies

In the brief descriptions below, are some of the cases that have been documented, by surviving victims based on witness testimonies submitted to the various enquiry commissions.

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.

Case 2

According to this widow, mobs came to her neighborhood at about 9 am on 1 November and began stoning Sikh houses in the vicinity. Sikhs who happened to be out were advised by the police to return home and stay indoors. They followed this advice and locked themselves inside their homes. Soon after, the crowds returned and started breaking into individual Sikh homes. The men were dragged out, beaten badly and burnt alive. Then the houses were systematically looted and most of them set on fire. The Sikh residents of the area owned their homes. According to this woman's estimate there were approximately 35 to 40 Sikh homes in the area, almost all of which had been destroyed and 55 men brutally murdered. Only five men from the area survive, owing their escape to their absence from home for one reason or another.

Case 3

On the afternoon of 1 November, at about 3.30 or 4 pm, a mob of about 250-300 men came to the school which has 525 pupils of whom 65% are non-Sikhs. The mob first set fire to the tents and the school desks. Thereafter, they demolished the boundary wall of the school. They then entered the building and broke open the steel cupboards and looted them. They stole the school typewriter, instruments belonging to the school band, utensils, etc. Two desks and seven steel cupboards were seen being taken away. They destroyed the library and scientific equipment in the laboratory. The school building was burnt as also the Headmaster's scooter. There were seven or eight policemen standing by who witnessed the mob's activities but did nothing to stop them. When asked to prevent the mob from damaging the school, they said that they could do nothing. No arrests are reported to have been made nor has any other action been taken. The FIR was lodged on 7 or 8 November. The Sikh SHO of the police station, located within sight of the school, is understood to be a relative of a Congress-I leader. He is said to have been beaten up on 31 October while in uniform, and was not to be seen (he was either in hiding or under orders--the witness could not say) from 31 October to 2 November. It was further conveyed to the Commission that even though the school imparts free education and is in receipt of a Government grant, no repairs of any nature had begun as on 18 December 1984.

Case 4

A social worker informed the Commission that he had been associated with the Shakkarpur Camp as a voluntary relief worker since 6 November. The camp had been set up on 3 November and the administration had forcibly closed it on 13 November. When asked how it had been 'forcibly closed' down, he replied that the water supply had been cut off. He then asked the authorities how they would assist the inmates to return to their original homes and was told that they would be returned in the same way by which they had been brought to the camp!

Case 5

A survivor from Mangolpuri, who had been operating his own scooter-rickshaw in shifts jointly with his brother, had been brought to a relief camp on 3 November by the army or CRP, he was not sure which. He related that there was increasing tension on 31 October after the news of the attack became known. He went to his neighbor for

shelter and was given protection but told to cut his hair, which he refused to do. The following morning when a crowd came around, his neighbors asked him to leave their house. Sikhs emerging on the street were seized and their hair and beards were forcibly cut. The mob, who, he said, was from the same locality, thereafter indulged in violence and looted individual homes. However, the damage done was mainly to the woodwork. Some movable property was stolen. Very early on the following morning, at about 4 am, the crowd returned, dragged the men out of their homes and beat them up. The neighbors pleaded for their lives and they were thus saved but only for the time being. In the evening the neighbors were also threatened with violence and that silenced them. Then five persons of his family--his brother, brother-in-law, uncle and two cousins--were belaboured with sticks and rods and burnt alive. Attempts to rape some of the women were, however, thwarted. The witness himself managed to escape by obtaining refuge in the house of a Harijan woman. On 3 November he was removed along with other survivors to a refugee camp. He named seven persons amongst the perpetrators of the crimes, one of whom was a local Congress-I worker identified as a supporter of a former MP.

Case 6

A woman from Trilokpuri described her harrowing experience. She and her husband, a Labana Sikh, 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 neighboring 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 whomsoever 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 neighbors and sought shelter wherever they could.

Case 7

The Commission gathered the following facts at the Sadar Bazar gurdwara (Delhi Cantonment). Having heard of the news of the assassination, one witness feared trouble and brought his family to the gurdwara. He found that some other families had already collected there. Leaving the women and children downstairs, the men went up to the roof from where they saw a crowd collecting at the local Congress-I office about 200 yards away. They had come by truck at 8.30 on morning of 1 November. This mob then advanced towards the gurdwara and started stoning the people they saw on the roof. The Sikhs had also collected some bricks which they threw at the crowd. When their supply was exhausted, the mob became emboldened and set fire to a shop which the gurdwara had rented out. The group of Sikhs, about twelve in number, collected all the swords available with them in the gurdwara and came out. The mob retreated in the face of this puny show of force. The police, who had been informed, came at about 3.30 pm. By that time, the fire had been put out. The police surprisingly expressed their inability to do anything further to help them. Consequently the Sikhs went back inside and locked the iron gates of the gurdwara. On 2 November, the army brought refugees from other colonies in the area surrounding Palam until there were 2,000 refugees in the gurdwara. They were housed, clothed and fed entirely by voluntary effort. The gurdwara itself fortunately escaped damage.

Case 8

This victim's family consisted of his father, four brothers, mother, two sisters-in-law, his wife and children. The family owned a bakery, a confectionery, a kirana shop and a small chemical industry. On 1 November at about 11 am, a mob of some four hundred attacked the shop and the factory. The father and the four brothers came out and pleaded with them. Some local Congress-I workers arranged a compromise and asked them all to go back. Eight persons from the mob, who were looting inside the shops, also came out and went away. Fifteen minutes later a bigger mob of about two thousand came and burnt the shops and the factory. One of the local Congress-I workers had a fair price shop in his name which, because of the complaints of the residents, had been canceled and allotted to this family. That seemed to be the bone of contention. The victim's house had the symbol 'Om' on the front and could not be identified as Sikh house unless it had been pointed out as such by a local person. The victim's father,

three brothers and sister-in-law were beaten and set on fire. Some liquid chemical and a powder were used as incendiary material. The victim himself escaped by hiding in the neighboring house of a Jat friend. He cut his hair and went to Palam airport from where he returned to the gurdwara on the 4th. There was no help from the police. There was no electricity in the locality (Sadh Nagar) for 72 hours. Army rescue work started on 3 November. The victim, who is a young man, is left with his widowed mother, widowed sister-in-law, brother's children and his own family to look after. He is not prepared to go back to his original home, which he considers unsafe, but is ready to settle down in Delhi in a safe area and to reestablish his bakery. He has already applied for a bank loan. The mob leader has been identified as a local Congress-I worker, who is said to be the right hand man of a former MP.

Case 9

What follows is a summary of an eye-witness account sent to the Commission by a practicing Chartered Accountant (a non-Sikh) living in New Friends' Colony. His account begins: "Delhi had been considered by us to be a civilized city. The news of rioting coming from different parts of the country from time to time had always carried an aura of remoteness--something which could not happen in Delhi. Or so it seemed up to 30 October recently." He continues to relate that after the announcement of Smt. Gandhi's death over the AIR, they began receiving telephone calls from friends informing them of incidents in various parts of the city--from Lorbhagh, from Ring Road, from Safdarjung Enclave--of Sikhs being badly beaten up and otherwise harassed. In view of the trouble, he and a friend decided to go to the airport later that night to receive a Sikh friend arriving in Delhi. On their way back they saw a car burning near the IIT on outer Ring Road. Then they saw a bus on fire. A little further on, they saw five taxis ablaze at a taxi stand. It was about midnight by now and, after dropping their friend at Panchsheel Enclave, they encountered several more burning vehicles and shards of glass from broken wind-screens littering the road. They saw only two policemen on the way home. Both of them were unarmed. One of them was hurling stones at the Sikhs along with the crowd. The other was urging people in the crowd to join in the attacks. The crowd was armed with lathis, crow-bars and iron rods. They did not see any firearms, either with the crowd or with the beleaguered Sikhs. In New Friends' Colony, they saw several Sikh-owned shops which had been set on fire. Intervening shops belonging to Hindus had not been touched. Two trucks parked nearby were set on fire. The crowd then invaded the gurdwara opposite the shops. They ransacked the rooms in the gurdwara compound and set fire to the buildings. Efforts to contact the police on the telephone were infructuous. He saw no signs of a police presence, much less intervention. The absence of the police, according to him, emboldened the mob. He felt that the 'scenes of wild mourning and mass popular anger on the television were not helping in calming the fury of the mob'. That afternoon he saw another mob looting a house in a cool and unhurried manner, without any dispute or competition among the looters. Within half-an-hour, the house had been completely ransacked and then set on fire. At about 4 pm, while the looting was going on, the siren of an approaching police vehicle was heard. This alarmed the mob who began to disperse but the vehicle just drove by and the crowd re-assembled.

Case 10

A 75 year old army officer, having retired in 1958, narrated that a mob consisting mostly of some DTC bus drivers from Hari Nagar Depot accompanied by anti-social elements attacked some shops and nearby houses in 'G' Block of Hari Nagar. Arson followed the looting. Cars, private buses, trucks and scooters parked in that area were also burnt. The Sikh residents, assisted by Hindu neighbors of Fateh Nagar and Shiv Nagar, came out and succeeded in challenging the miscreants and driving them away. On 3 November, at midday, the SHO of Tilak Nagar Police Station turned up in a jeep and asked the people to go indoors. Given the previous day's experience, the residents did not trust the police and some of them continued to maintain a vigil in the streets. Seeing this, the police officer sent some constables to the army officers house. They began abusing and beating his family members and even threatened one of them with a gun. They also beat this 75-year old man and confiscated his unloaded licensed revolver which he had owned since 1944. They dragged him by his hair to the jeep and took him to the Police Station, continuing to hit him with the butts of their guns. He was told to kill two Sikhs if he wanted to be freed. At the Police Station he was locked up and again beaten to the point of bleeding and becoming unconscious. He was beaten by a police officer who shouted that no Sikh would be able to live in the area with his hair and beard. Among the four police personnel who had beaten him, he named two. The following day, the police took him to

Court where a case under Section 307 of the IPC was registered against him. He was locked up in Tihar Jail along with some criminals and was able to secure his release on bail only on 12 November.

Case 11

The late husband of this witness was a tea-stall owner. They are originally from Alwar. They were resettled in Trilokpuri in 1977, on a plot measuring 22.5 sq. yds., and given a loan of Rs. 2,000 to build a dwelling. Her husband and three sons (the eldest aged 28, was a railway porter, the second aged 20, drove a hired scooter-rickshaw while the third was a boy of 14), were all killed on 1 November. She said that on 1 November, some people went around asking the shops to down shutters. Those who had closed them, returned to their homes. She then said that the pradhan (Congress-I) of their block went around calling people to assemble, as a mob was coming to burn the gurdwara. The police soon came on the scene and warned them all to return to their homes and to stay indoors assuring them that they would be safe if they did so. When a mob first came the Sikhs came out and repulsed them. Three such waves were repulsed but each time the police came and told them to go home and stay there. The fourth time the mob came in increased strength and started attacking individual homes, driving people out, beating and burning them and setting fire to their homes. The method of killing was invariably the same: a man was hit on the head, sometimes his skull broken, kerosene poured over him and set on fire. Before being burnt, some had their eyes gouged out. Sometimes, when a burning man asked for water, a man urinated on his mouth. Several individuals, including her sister's son tried to escape by cutting their hair. Most of them were also killed. Some had their hair forcibly cut but were nevertheless killed thereafter. She lost everything of value from her own home, including Rs. 7,000 in cash, a radio, a TV and other items. Despite being a middle-aged mother of four, she was nearly raped but was saved by providence. Nevertheless she was repeatedly humiliated and her clothes were torn off two or three times. She said that when the stricken women rushed out of their burning homes, the Gujjars (from village Chilla), bhangis and some others inquired from each other which woman they fancied and then proceeded to rape them. She heard people shouting to each other to kill every Sikh and that even if one escaped, it would be bad for them. There were twenty one males in her father-in-law's family. All of them were killed. Her brother was beaten and left for dead but fortunately survived.

Case 12

This resident of Nangloi, a venerable person with a flowing white beard who looked like a patriarch, belonged originally to Rawalpindi. He had previously lost everything during Partition. He informed the Commission that on 1 November at about 1:00 pm, many trucks and tractors with trolleys full of stones came to Nangloi from the direction of Bahadurgarh. This happened at a time when the Delhi/Haryana border was said to have been sealed. The drivers and passengers let loose a region of terror in the area. They first stoned the houses, then broke open and looted them, and finally dragged out the men and killed them. He said that 65 male Sikhs had been killed in Nangloi. Only the women, two old men and small children survived. In addition to stones, the mob carried studded rods, kerosene and some inflammable powder. He alleged that a political leader came on a motorcycle and identified the houses inhabited by Sikhs. Asked how he recognized the motorcyclist he replied that he knew him personally, having gone to him for help in solving personal problems. FIRs had been lodged on 4 and 5 November but so far no action had been taken nor any arrests made. No stolen goods had been recovered. Asked whether any women had been molested, he replied emphatically in the negative. He also said that trains between Rohtak and Delhi had been stopped at Nangloi and Sikh passengers dragged out, beaten and murdered.

Case 13

A retired Deputy Director of Animal Husbandry, Delhi State, this witness lives on a small farm on the southern outskirts of the capital. He appeared before the Commission at his own request. He grows vegetables, breeds chicken and maintains some cattle. He also renders free veterinary services to the residents of surrounding villages who frequently come to consult him regarding problems concerning their live-stock. He related that once the news of the assassination became widely known, feelings were aroused as a matter of course. He saw groups of people moving around and going to Sikh residences in the area which were attacked and looted. Some chickens and a buffalo were stolen from his farm and some damage inflicted on the main building. He was not interested in going into details and declared that he did not want any compensation for himself. Nor had he any particular complaint against the miscreants whom, he felt, had been put up to their misdeeds. He told the Commission in as many words that his major concern was for the future. What, he asked concisely, was in store for the country when anti-

social forces were enabled, or were able, to perpetrate misdeeds or to break the law with impunity. He said that this was his sole concern and that he had sought an interview with the Commission only to request it to devise measures to ensure the future of the country.

Case 14

A serving army NCO made available to the Commission a copy of a letter he had sent to his superior officer. He was returning to Delhi from Amritsar on the Frontier Mail on 2 November 1984, after availing of five days' casual leave. He states that he was witness to the stopping of trains on the approach to Delhi across the Yamuna when Sikh passengers, including some Sikh soldiers, were beaten and/or killed. After being beaten, some were thrown into the river while others were roasted alive. A few were able to save their lives after they had shaved or cut their hair. He also saw the heads and beards of dead Sikhs being shaved after which kerosene was poured over their faces and set alight so that the dead person could not be identified. After about two hours, a guard over a treasury consignment fired three shots in the air which caused the mob to scatter and the train then moved off. Upon reaching Delhi Main Station, he says that he saw many bodies of dead Sikhs. He reported his experience to the RTO at Delhi station. He wrote that he himself was spared because he was in uniform and that the mob told him that they were letting him off for that reason.

Case 15

On 21 December three members of the Commission visited Sultanpuri and Mangolpuri. They inspected the damaged houses and saw the terrible havoc that had been wreaked. The tales of violence were broadly similar to other accounts they had heard. The new item was that they were told that the police had fired on Sikhs who had grouped in the street for self-defense. They named a police officer who allegedly fired on the group and killed two men. The marks of .303 rifle bullets on some houses were pointed out to the members. A spent bullet was found embedded in a wall. This police officer was still posted in Sultanpuri Police Station and continued to threaten and abuse Sikh residents. The Commission was given several names of miscreants amongst whom was a kerosene depot holder, who was said to have supplied free kerosene oil. The others named were the block pradhan (Congress-I), another oil dealer and a Congress-I worker described as a special confidant of a prominent Congress-I leader. The local perpetrators of the violence continue to threaten and intimidate the remaining residents, almost all of whom at that time were women and children. Nearly all the men had gone to Rajasthan and were planning to stay there till at least after the elections. The Commission was told of the harassment of a Muslim resident of the area, who had given protection and assistance to the Sikhs for which he had been beaten up. He was threatened, even as late as on 12 December, for continuing to give them advice and assistance.

Case 16

This victim, originally from Alwar, has resided in Delhi for about 25 years. In 1977, he had been moved along with others to Block 32, Trilokpuri. He operated his own cycle-rickshaw and owned a pucca house consisting of two rooms. He told the Commission that out of the nine male members in his family, seven had been killed. Only he and one brother survive. The gist of his gruesome experience is as follows: The killings took place on the afternoon of 1 November. The usual method was to make the victims immobile by beating them. Then kerosene was poured over them and they were set on fire. He mentioned that, earlier, a police havildar, whom he named, and two constables had come to the area and when they saw a group of Sikhs gathered to defend themselves, the havildar shot and killed one of them. He named three local political figures as having been leaders of the aggressive mob. When the Sikhs grouped, the mob dispersed. But the police persuaded them to return to their respective homes. When they returned and locked themselves in, the mobs came again and meted out broadly similar treatment to each house. They first knocked at the door asking the inmates to come out. If they did not, the door was broken open and the inmates were dragged out. If they opened the door, they got the same treatment. They were first beaten, and sometimes knocked senseless, thereafter kerosene was poured over the individual who was then set alight. In almost all cases, the neighbors did not help. Rather, they participated in the violence. He said that four types of cases had been registered: assault and robbery, rape, arson and murder. There had been no action so far; a few culprits who had been arrested were released within a few days and were still at large and threatening the people. No efforts had been made to recover stolen property and none had been returned to the owners. He also alleged that bank officials and/or civil servants had indulged in fraud or mischief while distributing the cheques covering the compensation stipulated by the Government.

Case 17

This witness is a raagi (performer of kirtan) employed by the Delhi Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. He informed the Commission that, being on duty that morning at one of the gurdwaras, he left home at about 7 am on 1 November and disembarked from a bus at Punjabi Bagh to catch a connecting bus. He was seized by the crowd and roughed up. His hair was forcibly cut but he managed to escape. He returned to his house, collected his family and managed to reach safety. It took him some time to round them up. During this time he saw the local dealer in kerosene oil and a local Congress-I leader supplying free kerosene to the crowd. He saw a woman who was five months pregnant being dragged into a house. She did not emerge for a considerable time. They were taken to a relief camp on 3 November. FIRs were lodged on 4 or 5 November but no action had been taken. The same people who brutalized them continue to threaten them and joke about the Sikhs. Asked how he knew that the perpetrators were Congress-I men, he replied that they were all shouting slogans such as 'Indira Gandhi Zindabad' and 'Sajjan Kumar Zindabad'.

Case 18

During its visit to S.S. Mota Singh School Camp, Narang Colony, the Commission heard a general account from the President and Secretary of the local Cooperative Housebuilding Society. The general pattern of violence was described as follows. A group of urchins, led and encouraged by some adults, were collected and supplied with free liquor, iron rods, kerosene or petrol. They then went on a rampage beating individuals, of whom some were burnt. Only Sikh houses were burnt--and these were identified by one of the leaders. Those who escaped and went to the police for assistance were ignored or, worse, ill-treated by the police themselves. Such police personnel were known to have instigated killings for fear of being identified by the victims. A typical police report would read somewhat as follows: 'A small group was gathered at a point when they were faced by a large number of Sikhs with kirpans. Feeling threatened they began attacking Sikhs.' No searches were made to recover stolen property. The police only went around the residential areas appealing to persons to surrender stolen goods. While some items were recovered in this manner, not even 10% of them had been returned to the legitimate owners. In the Janakpuri area, fourteen gurdwaras were burnt. The building of S. S. Mota Singh School had been burnt and the metal door destroyed --and the local police station is only 250 metres away. At a nearby school, the building and eleven buses had been burnt. Attempts to get police intervention were infructuous. Several people had seen a prominent Congress-I politician's brother-in-law advising or instigating the mobs. They also saw young men coming to the crowd on motorcycles, presumably to convey instructions or give guidance. The residents of the area were upset with the Congress-I whose representatives, they firmly believed, were responsible for the violence. They were even more upset that after the violence no representatives of either the Congress-I or representatives of any other political party came to sympathize with them or give them any relief.

This briefing paper sets out, by reference to reputable sources, an account of how thousands of innocent Sikhs were horrifically massacred, tortured, raped, beaten, and burnt alive during the pogroms carried out in Delhi and other Indian cities in November, 1984. There is overwhelming and documented evidence of state involvement in the preparation and execution of the killings. Those guilty and responsible for this outrage remain unpunished till this day. The Human Rights Advisory Group extends its deepest sympathies to the victims and their families. In their memory we have undertaken this work and pledge to continue the campaign for justice.

**Human Rights Advisory Group,
Punjabis in Britain All Party Parliamentary Group,
Westminster,
November 2004.**

On the twentieth anniversary of the mass killings of Sikhs, the new Congress-led government should launch fresh investigations into and make a public commitment to prosecute the planners and implementers of the violence. Seven government-appointed commissions have investigated these attacks. But the commissions were all either whitewashes or they were met with official stonewalling and obstruction. The time for commissions that do not lead to prosecutions is over. After two decades, the prosecutors and police should act. There is more than enough evidence to do so now.

**Human Rights Watch,
October 2004.**

Amnesty International urges the Indian authorities to ensure that the perpetrators of the violence carried out against the Sikh community, in 1984, be brought to justice. Amnesty International calls on the Indian authorities to end impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations carried out in Punjab state between the mid 1980's and 1990's, including the 1984 riots in Delhi. During this period, a range of human rights violations were perpetrated but few people have been brought to justice. Until justice is delivered to victims and their families the wounds left by this period remain open.

**Amnesty International,
October 2004.**

This important document not only highlights the tragedy of November 1984 but also sets out a call today for action to tackle this injustice.

**John McDonnell MP,
Chair, Punjabis in Britain All Party Parliamentary Group,
November 2004.**