
WHY I TOOK TO AK-47

THE SHOCKING STORY OF A SIKH YOUTH WHO WAS TORTURED AND HARASSED BY INDIA'S SECURITY FORCES AND WHO FINALLY JOINED THE KHALISTAN COMMANDO FORCE.



PUNJAB HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATION

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A P.H.R.O. PRESS RELEASE

Ludhiana, Sept. 29- The U. S. Court has dismissed as false the extradition proceedings against two Sikh Students leaders Ranjit Singh Gill and Sukhminder Singh Sandhu, who were warned by the Indian Government in General Vaidya and Lalit Maken murder cases.

The District Judge of New York, Robert W. Sweet, on September 27, 1990 announced this Judgement to set free the Sikh Students Federation leaders Ranjit Singh Gill (Kuki) and Sukhminder Singh Sandhu (Sukhi) in case the Government of India did not file a fresh case of prefer an appeal within 30 days.

The defence counsel, Ms Mary Pike today informed the Punjab Human Rights Organisation (PHRO) Head Office here about the historic judgement on telephone.

The U.S. District Judge based his judgement mainly on the Poona Designate Judge Mr. V.L. Ruikar's decision in General A.S. Vaidya murder case in which the court had completely ruled out any conspiracy while it sentenced to death Harjinder Singh Jinda and Sukhdev Singh Sukha on their confessional statements.

The Hon'ble Judge ruled that the Government of India had deliberately introduced false and fabricated evidence, suppressed information and thereby tried to mislead the U.S. Court.

The two SSF leaders were arrested at the behest of the Indian Government from New Jersey in May 1987. Since then, they have been lodged in the New York jail.

Earlier, it is recalled, the defence counsel, Ms Mary Pike and Mr. Ronald Kuby visited India in October 1987 to collect evidence to be filed with the U. S. Court; they were not allowed to enter Punjab by the Indian Government.

The PHRO and the Punjab Sikh Lawyers Council (PSLC) activists managed to meet the American lawyers at Chandigarh and arranged their meeting with the victims of state repression and relatives of Sukhi and Kuki. The important functionaries of the PHRO and PSLC themselves gave sworn affidavits in favour of the young Sikh activists.

The P.H.R.O. had also represented to the U.S. Secretary of State to drop extradition of the students as their lives would be in peril, if they were sent to India. They should be set free and allowed to stay in U.S.A. or go to the country of their choice.

-Harinder Singh Khalsa, *Chairman*, P.H.R.O.

THE CASES OF DISAPPEARANCE OF PIARA SINGH AND ANUP SINGH

Hundreds of Akali Dal (B) workers led by Sukhjinder Singh along with members of the (formerly All India) Sikh Students Federation, on December 18, 1939, tried to besiege the Kapurthala Senior Superintendent of Police (S.S.P.) Swaran Singh's office as also the nearby office of the Crime investigating Agency (C-LA,) to press the police to produce Anup Singh (32), a senior leader of the AISSF and Piara Singh (60), who were allegedly abducted by the police from Kassochahal and Lachine Khurd villages respectively in the presence of local residents.

THE AKALI CONSCIENCE PRICKED

Sukhjinder Singh, who along with 500 political activists was rounded up by the Kartarpur police to frustrate the former's attempt to besiege the police offices, went on hunger strike till the detenus were set free or produced in court. Thousands of other villagers were prevented from joining the agitators by the police, resulting in injuries to half a dozen activists.

Once again thousands of Akali Dal workers and AISSF activists on December 22, 1989, besieged the police picket outside the C.I.A. Building and in front of the office of the S.S.P.- Kapurthala, demanding the production of the detenus and immediate release of all the protestors including Sukhjinder Singh, who went on an indefinite hunger strike in the District Sub-Jail at Kapurthala.

The Important leaders who participated in the siege and picketing included G. S. Tohra, President of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (S.G.P-C,)h Thekedar Surjan Singh and Surjit Singh Sandhu, an AISSF leader. About 400 women led by Mohinder Kaur, wife of Sukhjinder Singh, staged a demonstration against the police. Prominent Hindus of the area also participated in the protest.

TOHRA AND THEKEDAR JOIN THE RACE

The Deputy Inspector General (D. I. G.) of Police, D. R. Bhatti, and the next day directed the police to register cases against the police officials who had taken away Jathedar Piara Singh and Anup Singh. This decision was announced at a meeting of the District Development and Grievances Committee held under the chairmanship of NX. Arora, Commissioner, Jalandhar Division.

Bhatti also directed the police to withdraw the case under section 107/151 Criminal Procedure Code (Cr. P. C.) against Sukhjinder Singh and others. Sukhjinder Singh called off his nine day old hunger strike on

December 26 after I.K. Gujral, Union Minister for External Affairs, made an appeal to do so. Accordingly, all the political activists along with Sukhjinder Singh were set free.

GUJRAL'S APPEAL AND WITHDRAWAL OF AGITATION

More than ten months have passed since the withdrawal of the agitation at Kapurthala, The police has not released or produced the two detenus in court nor have they taken steps to punish the guilty police officials.

This investigation report by P.H.R.O. pertains to the disappearance of Jathedar Piara Singh and the police atrocities on the members of his family.

A Kartarpur "sadar" (main) police party led by Inspector Puran Singh raided the residence of Jathedar Piara Singh at Lakhan Khurd village on May 24, 1989, and picked up his son Gurbachan Singh, brother Amrik Singh and a few other villagers including Kapur Singh, village revenue official Kulwinder Singh, Bhagat Singh, his two sons Amarjit Singh and Sukhdev Singh, Gurdial Singh, his two sons Amarjit Singh and Nirmal Singh and Sewa Singh, his two sons Bhagwan Singh and Amrik Singh- They were taken to the Police Station. Jathedar Piara Singh and his other three sons were not at home at that time.

Next day, Piara Singh's wife, Harbans Kaur and his daughter-in-law Paramjit Kaur were also taken away by the same police party. In the evening the village elders assured the police that Piara Singh would be produced before them the next day and got the women released from the police. The police did not release others arrested by it.

JATHEDAR PIARA SINGH "ARREST" AND TORTURE

Surjit Singh, head of the ("Panchayat") village council, Piara Singh's son Anup Singh, Rehhpal Singh, Nishan Singh and Hardev Singh, on May 25, 1989, produced Jathedar Piara Singh before the Deputy Superintendent of Police (D.S.P.), S. S. Bajwa as promised.

Next day the Jathedar was shifted to the sadar police station where he was brutally tortured by D.S.P. Kehar Singh, Inspector Puran Singh, A.S.I., Nirmal Singh and Constables Ram Saran Dass and Rattan Singh in the presence of the detained villagers namely Gurbachan Singh, Mewa Singh, Kapur Singh and Amrik Singh, Piara Singh was completely unrobed and was divested of his religious symbols. The eye witness gave a detailed account of the hair-raising story of the torture. He was beaten with the butt-ends of rifles. The constables pulled his hair (from the head and beard), while police officers continued slapping him with their shoes. The DSP gave him blows. They were seeking information from Piara Singh about the whereabouts of his absconding son, Raghbir Singh alias "Bira".

As Jathedar Piara Singh evidently had no knowledge, the police continued with the torture. He was now tied to a rope. Its other end passed through the ceiling fan hook. As the rope was pulled by two constables, up went the detenu who now hung in a state of suspension in the air with his head positioned downwards. The police officials looked up to hit the old man, till he lost consciousness while still in the air. The police then loosened the rope so that Piara Singh's person landed on the floor. After a while the detenu regained consciousness. The police men again pounced upon him. This time they took up a small log and rolled it on his thighs. His legs were pulled apart.

The entire process of torture was repeated in the case of each of the other detenus. Gurbachan Singh was tortured and humiliated in the presence of his father in the same way.

ALL MEMBERS OF AMRITDHARI FAMILY FIELD

While all others were released on June 30, 1989, Piara Singh, his brother Amrik Singh and son Gurbachan Singh were kept illegally in detention as they were not produced in any court during that period. His brother and son were also set free on July 18. The police evidently used Piara Singh as a hostage so that his son's surrender could be ensured.

After waiting for a few days the village elders, Kapur Singh, Sant Singh, Amrik Singh and Gurmit Singh (Sarpanch) contacted the police to enquire about Piara Singh. D.S.P. Kehar Singh and Inspector Puran Singh told them that Piara Singh had suffered injuries as a result of the torture and that he was convalescing under their care. He would be released as soon as he recovered.

The village council waited for another 10 days. They then met D.I.G. D. R. Bhatti, S.S.P. Swaran Singh and S.P.-(Operations), Santokh Singh to seek Piara Singh's release. These officers feigned ignorance and flatly denied the arrest.

As fast resort, the village group once again went to Sadar Police Station where they were threatened with dire consequences in case they did not stop talking of Piara Singh. It was clear to the villagers that Piara Singh had been killed by the police in its custody and that further pursuit of the matter was futile.

In the meantime, Piara Singh's wife Harbans Kaur sent telegrams and registered letters to the President, the Prime Minister, Punjab Governor and Director General of Police (D.G.P.) requesting them to intervene in the matter and get Piara Singh released from the police. No one responded and the poor old woman felt lost in the race to rescue her husband. The Army's futile attempt

Constable Gurvinder Singh (No. 14482Q66 K) serving in the Indian Army tried to move the Army administration for the release of his father. For this purpose, he wrote an application to his Army Headquarters, 11 Corps, who, in turn, asked HQ Jalandhar Sub-Area to liaise with the Kapurthala police. Major S.P Singh of HQ 23 (1) Armed Bde wrote directly to the DGP, K.P.S. Gill.

The Punjab DGP wrote on August 4, 1989, to the SSP, Kapurthala, directing him to report within 15 days the whereabouts of Piara Singh, A copy of that note was also sent to Gurvinder Singh. After this nothing was heard from the Civil Administration. The Army too, fell silent.

Punjab Human Rights Organisation (PHRO) received a letter from the detenu's absconding son, Raghbir Singh (24) in September, 1990. The PHRO Immediately sent a two-member team comprising advocates Harchand Singh Gill and Mukesh Inder Singh Dhillon to investigate the entire matter. The PHRO team visited Lakhan Khurd village and interviewed members of Piara Singh's family and members of the village council. The team also recorded statements of the persons concerned.

THE STORY OF RAGHBIR SINGH

The young Sikh activist Raghbir Singh recounted in his own hand in Punjabi the story as below:

"I, Raghbir Singh son of Jathedar Piara Singh, am a resident of village Lakhan Khurd, Police Station Sadar in district Kapurthala I was good at studies and secured 71% marks in matriculation and 74% in Higher Secondary Examinations. After that I got admission in Nawab Jassa Singh Ahluwalia College in B. A. Part-I

"All members of my family are baptised Sikhs that is why I have been taking interest in the Sikh faith. I too look 'Amrit' and started maintaining all Sikh symbols and performed rituals. I joined the All India Sikh Students Federation in September, 1986. While we were busy in organising a Kirtan Darbar on behalf of the AISSF at Lakhan Kalan village, the police rounded up the federation activists including myself and Surjit Singh Sandhu. We were kept in Sadar Police station for six days illegally. Likewise the police continued harassing me and members of my family.

ARRESTED 20 TIMES IN ONE YEAR

"In 1987 my father's sister's son Harvinder Singh alias Toapi left his home due to the unending police terror. The Kapurthala police now started picking me up on the pretext that Harvinder Singh had been

visiting our home. They "arrested" me about 20 times during 1387. Every time my parents had to pay ransom money to the police to get me out of their illegal custody.

"To save myself from the Kapurthala police, I joined a college at Jalandhar in B.A. (final) so as to lead a smooth and peaceful life. But harassment, humiliation and torture of my parents and brothers continued at the hands of the Kapurthala police.

"The Kapurthala sadar police party led by Inspector Dilbagh Singh Pannu and ASI Jagtar Singh raided our village house on June 10, 1988, Nothing incriminating was found but they apprehended my elder brothers, Gurbachan Singh and Anup Singh, (not the other Anup Singh mentioned at the beginning of this report ; PHRO). They asked them to produce me before the police, Sarpanch Gurmit Singh, Nambardar Kapur Singh and my father along with other village elders persuaded me to surrender to the police on 14 June, 1988 on assurance by the police that I would be let off after interrogation.

HOW RAGHBIR SINGH WAS TORTURED?

"I was immediately shifted to a room where I was asked to put off all my clothes and religious symbols. My underwear (Kachhaira) was forcibly removed to make me completely naked. DSP Kehar Singh, Inspector Dilbagh Singh, ASI Jagtar Singh and constables, Karamjit Singh and Avtar Singh started beating me up with canes, iron rods and leather belts. My hands were fastened with ropes and I was made to hang from the ceiling of the room upside down all body joints and feet were given strokes with heavy sticks. The police officials wanted me to help them in nabbing the underground activists of the AISSF and armed groups. I knew nothing about them and could not escape myself from the police clutches. I lost my consciousness and was brought down. I was subjected to inhuman treatment for about two hours and not allowed to sleep at night. Similar treatment was given the next day.

"On June 16, 1988, I was blindfolded, my hands were fastened behind my back and were shifted to the C.I.A. staff where D.S.P: S.S. Bajwa, ASI Gurbachan Singh along with four constables made me sit on the floor. Head Constable Karamjit Singh while supporting my back with his knees pulled my long hair backwards and ASI Gurbachan Singh along with others stretched my legs apart resulting in swooning. When consciousness returned they gave electric shocks on the chest and other private organs of my body from a Dynamo-Battery apparatus causing severe pain. After treating me like animal, they threw me in another room. I was not able even to put on my clothes. At night I was fed by an old man (detainee) as my hands were numb.

EVEN SEXUAL ABUSES

"At 10 A.M. the next day, SSP Swaran Singh and his bodyguards placed an extra thick pestle on the front side of my thighs, the two of the bodyguards stood on the pestle and others rotated it. My muscles were broken. This time I was made to lie on the floor prostrate and pestle exercise was repeated by pressing my lower legs against a wooden roller. They kept on torturing me and asked me questions for an hour. They passed on electric current through my ears due to which I lost hearing power.

"Then I was shifted to the sadar police station, where I was repeatedly tortured in the presence of others just to humiliate me. The police also indulged in sexual abuses. There were 15/20 illegal detainees in the sadar police station while 20/25 in the CIA staff who were rotting there for the last two or three months.

"On June 18, 1988, at about 6 P.M, I was blindfolded and was taken to an unknown place by ASI Gurbachan Singh and his force. In the meantime I was informed that my end had come and that I should prepare myself for the eventuality. After about 8 hours' drive I was helped to get down the jeep. I was asked to say my last prayers. If I wanted to live, I was asked, I should sit in a van with tinted glasses to identify and have arrested other members of the A.I.S.S.F. and the Babbar Khalsa. When they failed to elicit any positive response from me, I was taken to the room of a huge building which, I learnt later, was the camp office of the Central Reserve Police Force.

TWO NOVEL WAYS OF THE C.R.P.F.

"There I was confined for five days. Needless to repeat that I was subjected again to the same kind of grueling experience as I had recently undergone in the custody of the police. However, my CRPF tormentors had two new methods employed on me. One, red chillies were thrown into my eyes and two; I was made to lie straight on the ground with my face towards the roof. Then water in a thin constant stream was put into my nose so that I gasped for breath and became unconscious. This process was repeated all the five days.

"On June 22, 1988, DSP Kehar Singh and his force comprising Inspector Dilbagh Singh, ASI Jagtar Singh, Havildars Karamjit Singh and Avtar Singh and a few others took me to Sadar police station, Kapurthala, where I was unrobed and was severely beaten up with leather belts. This caused blood to ooze out of my body. Later a 200-W3tt bulb was pressed against my body. I was also given electric currents. On June 23-24 I was taken in a car with tinted glasses by Inspector Dilbagh Singh, Havildars Karamjit Singh, Avtar Singh and Lai Singh. I was asked to identify and have arrested any suspect and was promised release in the unilaterally settled bargain. Since I could not identify anyone I was taken back to the police station, I was again beaten and tortured- This way I was taken out for two days, with no results.

ATTEMPT TO TURN HIM INTO "CAT" FAILS

"On June 25 at about 9 A. M, I was taken to the C.I.A. staff office where SSP Swaran Singh, S.P. (Operations) Santokh Singh, Inspector Gurbachan Singh, A.S.I.s Pargat Singh and Gurbachan Singh 'Buchar' (the tyrant) as well as a few constables were present. There I was subjected to torture again.

"In the next few days I was taken to Kala Sangha and Bholath police stations. As a result of the torture I was really miserable. I could not stand up on my own. I could not eat as my hands were totally paralysed. I was helped by the police officials to eat my food. I could not change clothes or ease myself. My left ear lost hearing power.

THE COURT FINDS NO EVIDENCE

"When the police totally failed to get anything out of me, they registered a case on July 6, 1988, under sections 212 216 of I.P.C. and sections 3/4 of T.A.D.A, at Sadar police station, Kapurthala, for harbouring and aiding Babbar Khalsa activists Wadhawa Singh (a member of the Panthic Committee), Tarsem Singh, Makhan Singh and Balbir Singh. The Designate Judge, Kapurthala, Gurjit Singh Sandhu, on February 27, 1989, found me falsely implicated because I was earlier a member of the AISSF and acquitted me of all the charges.

"After my release, I went to Madhya Pradesh, two thousand kilometers away from Punjab, to stay with one of my relations. There I joined a computer course. I received reports from back home of harassment of my father and other members of my family. It was clear to me that the police was still after me. I had no option except to go underground",

THE QUEST FOR HONOURABLE LIFE ENDS

Thus ended Raghbir Singh Bira's quest for honourable, peaceful life away from Punjab. He returned to Punjab to actively join the militant ranks. He is now a member of the Khalistan Commando Force headed by Paramjit Singh Panjwar. Although he renounced his relations with the family, the police arrested other members of Raghbir Singh's family, tortured them and kept them in illegal custody. The process is on as we make this report to the world. Meanwhile, Jathedar Piara Singh and Baba Anup Singh, mentioned earlier in the report, remain "untraced".

Ludhiana,
October 22, 1990

— D. S. GILL, Advocate
General Secretary, P.H.R.O.