

Know Your RIGHTS

World Sikh News presents a sampling of documentation which is an indictment of the police, security agencies and respective governments in Punjab. Readers are invited to visit the websites mentioned here to learn more and become informed and concerned citizens.



Documenting human rights violation is the key work of human rights activists world wide. From Amnesty International to the People's Union for Civil Liberties, from Punjab Human Rights Organisation to the International Human Rights Organisation, from lawyers to political activists who have been engaging governments in cases of human rights violations -all organizations have questioned the role of the government in committing gross and systematic abuse of human rights.

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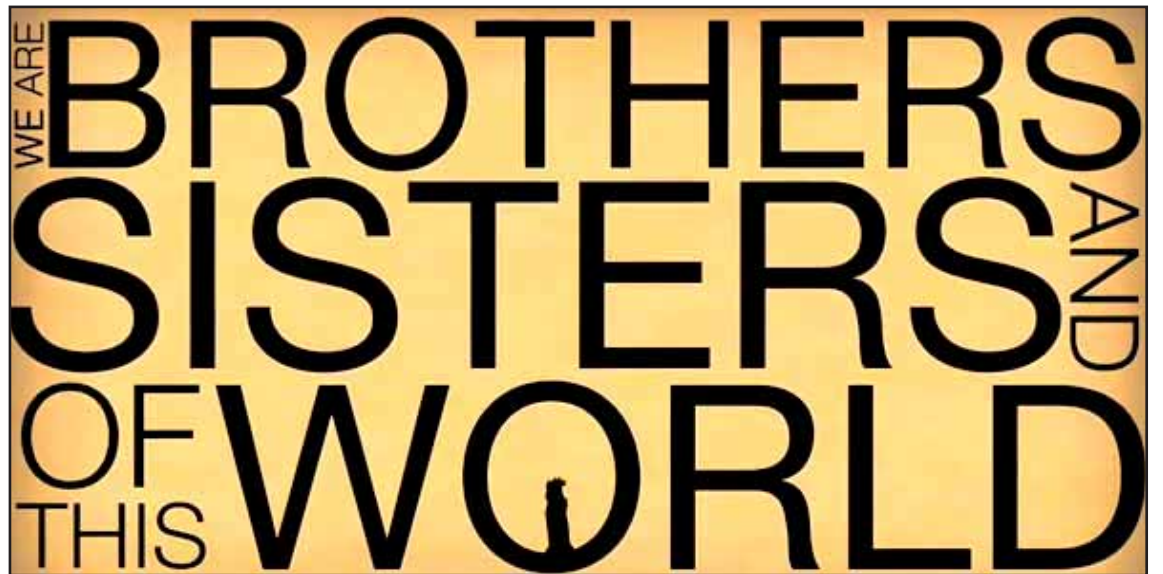
Smoldering Embers Story of Long and Unending Wait for Justice for the Disappeared in Panjab

The voluminous data documents a trajectory of police excesses and helpless victims of state terrorism. It was an atmosphere bred by a state in total control of a police force with scant respect for the constitutional and moral bindings that led to the creation of super cops actually super vigilantes as "encounter specialists".

This narrative by families works towards the professed aim of getting justice to the victims and their families, to get the guilty persons their deserved retribution and in some way restore the dignity of the dead. It is not only the recounting of the stories of the disappeared but an insight into the human side of the loss and also the legal outlook of the case so far.

The first chapter Consequences: Those Left Behind takes into account the effect of disappearances on family members of those who were abducted and killed clandestinely. Many of these families did not get to see the last remains of their loved ones and many never even received the intimation of their "elimination". To live in darkness as to what happened to the ones they loved, to never know the truth and sometimes hope in despair that their loved ones might just walk through the door one day is like living in hell every single day of their lives. Their life is taken out of the ordinary and they experience the same fears and hurt that they had a decade ago.

This chapter is an interview with two families bound by the disappearances and very dissimilar in their lives after the disappearance. One interview is with Paramjeet Kaur, the wife of Mr. Jaswant Singh Khalra, who has been actively involved with the case with the NHRC and the other one with a poor family who could not even decipher what, was going on. One is a woman who has become a beacon for struggle and the other a



family struggling for daily existence. Most of the victims fall in the second category --scared whenever a stranger walks in through the doors thinking he/she is a police personnel and barely surviving above poverty.

The second chapter Mr. Jaswant Singh Khalra: As I remember him is Parmjeet Kaur Khalra's recollection of her life with Jaswant Singh Khalra and her struggle after his kidnapping and disappearance. She is carrying forward the human rights mission of her dead husband by personally collecting information from families of the disappeared and submitting applications to NHRC. She has also been actively pursuing her case against the guilty police officers, including top police cop, K.P.S. Gill, responsible for her husband's disappearance.

The third chapter Those Lost Forever narrates the stories of kidnappings, disappearances and torture and comprises the pivot around which this report revolves. It might appear to be repetitive but the very repetition of the disappearances is what we are trying to highlight in the state of Panjab during its anarchic "police rule".

The fourth chapter Panjab Police: The Torture Machine details at length torture methods of the Panjab police. Their brutality and their impunity have surpassed all human limits. This chapter also details the plethora of laws for the weak, the accused and the under-trials and the various methods and manoeuvres used by the security agencies to torture and 'still get away with murder'.

The fifth chapter NHRC: What next? looks into the judgments delivered by the NHRC. It analyses the various legal arguments of gov-



ernmental organisations, judgments of various courts and the NHRC. It takes a critical view of the various stages when the Commission and the government have denied the system of justice from taking its right due course.

The last chapter Acknowledging the Past takes a look at the various truth commissions instituted around the world where human rights violations have taken place, bordering on genocide as in Panjab. This chapter reiterates the need to set up a Truth Commission to probe violations and bring the guilty to book to ensure that the dignity of those killed extrajudicially is restored and the living victims get the justice they deserve.

Smoldering Embers is a Voices for Freedom report, published by Booksurge and available on amazon.com. It can also be read online.

Reduced to Ashes
The Insurgency and Human Rights in Punjab Report Documents Disappearances, Extrajudicial

Resources

- www.ensaaf.org
- www.amnesty.org
- www.humanrightswatch.org
- www.saldef.org
- www.sikhcoalition.org
- www.lfhri.org
- www.unhcr.org
- www.worldsikhnews.com
- www.pucl.org
- http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Jaswant_singh_khalra
- <http://www.humanrightsfilmfest.net.nz/>
- http://www.indiewire.com/ots/fes_00Human_000622_wrap.html
- http://infosthetics.com/archives/2008/10/universal_declaration_of_human_rights_movie.html

Executions and Mass Illegal Cremations by Police in Panjab

by Ram Narayan Kumar with Amrik Singh, Ashok Agrwaal, and Jaskaran Kaur

This 634-page volume contains extensive documentation and analysis of hundreds of cases of enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial killing of victims by the security forces in Punjab during the political unrest of the 1980s and early 1990s. Included in this first volume-authored by R.N. Kumar with Amrik Singh, Ashok Agrwaal and Jaskaran Kaur-are more than 500 testimonies by the families of the victims describing 672 cases of extrajudicial executions by the police in the district of Amritsar alone.

The Final Report builds upon the work of the late Mr. Jaswant Singh Khalra, a lawyer and human rights activist who was himself abducted and "disappeared" by Punjab Police in September 1995 for his pursuit of justice and human rights. Mr. Khalra had discovered, from the records of three cremation grounds in Amritsar district, cases of mass illegal cremations by police over many years. As Peter Rosenblum of the Harvard Law School notes in his preface to this volume, the careful analysis by the authors allows the reader to "pierce through the thick veils of ideology, intrigue and 'state security' that obscure our understanding of the campaign to pacify Punjab."

The Committee for Coordination on Disappearances in Punjab (CCDP) has been investigating and documenting the systematic and large-scale abuse of basic human rights by police in Punjab since its formation in November 1997.