

March 12, 2020

An Open Letter to Honorable MPPs, Ontario Provincial Parliament

Subject: Concern about private member Bill 177 to proclaim ‘Sikh Genocide Awareness Week’, during Hindu Heritage Month, as it is and damages Canada-India relations.

Dear Honorable MPP:

The upcoming private member’s Bill 177 by MPP Gurratan Singh, to proclaim ‘Sikh Genocide Awareness Week’, aims at disturbing harmony and peace among Canadians, as it proclaims first week of November as ‘Sikh Genocide Awareness Week’ in a month that Ontario celebrates as ‘Hindu Heritage Month’.

The bill 177 builds on the ill-conceived motion passed by previous Liberal Government, moved by then MPP Harinder Malhi, that stated 1984 Genocide for first time. The motion was passed by some MPPs out of sheer ignorance. This should be rescinded by your government, as it defied facts and the very definition of ‘Genocide’. A fact sheet on 1984 Sikh riots is attached for the honorable MPPs on this matter for an informed and well-considered decision.

We believe that Bill 177 divides Ontarians and has serious implications for Canada-India relations. India is a friend of Canada, as trade and business between two countries is on upswing.

The, Bill 177, if passed, will damage Canada-India relations, affecting Ontario economy. Still the wounds of first terrorist act of, Air India Bombing, is fresh on people’s mind. The National Alliance of Indo-Canadians (NAIC) is committed to enhance Canada-India friendship, both being commonwealth democracies with shared values.

Given the divisive and hate agenda of the Bill 177, the NAIC, on behalf of Indo-Canadians, condemns the private member’s Bill 177.

We ask upon your Honor and for the attention of honorable MPPs to reject Bill 177 on merit as it finds its roots in falsehood, divisive politics and revulsion.

We look forward to your leadership for the cause of Ontario.

Sincerely,



Azad K. Kaushik, DSc (Paris)
President

FACT SHEET ON 1984 SIKH RIOTS*

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS AND NO TO DIVISIVE POLITICS

Many members of the Indo-Canadian community, made up of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Jains, and Buddhists, have serious concerns regarding the attempt by some members of the Sikh diaspora across Canada to politicize the 1984 Sikh riots as “genocide” so that they can promote their agenda of turning Punjab state in India into a separate state for Sikhs called Khalistan.

The Fact Sheet puts forward important facts so that informed decisions are made. As Indo-Canadians, we cannot allow personal agendas of few political leaders to do damage not only to the community harmony but also put in jeopardy our relations with India, an important ally and world’s second largest democracy, needless to mention fifth largest economy.

Following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 31st October 1984 (the head of the governing Congress Party), by her two Sikh bodyguards, a few senior Congress Party leaders instigated Congress party workers to take revenge on innocent Sikhs living in mostly Delhi and adjoining States. In the ensuing violence, 3386 persons of Sikh origin were killed. Out of this number, 2733 people were killed in Delhi alone. From the testimonies of survivors and witnesses, the atrocities committed were horrifying. Some of us in this Committee who are from Delhi and adjoining States worked hard to protect many Sikhs.

Was it a genocide? NO!

Were these gross atrocities? YES!

Were human rights of Sikhs living in Delhi and some other states violated? YES!

Was the State responsible? NO!

As mentioned above, some Senior Congress Party Leaders instigated the Congress Party workers and sympathizers to attack innocent Sikhs to seek revenge for the assassination of Indira Gandhi. All the opposition parties and many Congress Leaders strongly condemned this violence.

On August 12, 2005, the then Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh (from the Congress Party and a Sikh himself) apologized in the Indian Parliament for the 1984 riots.

Subsequent commissions of inquiries (Kapur-Mittal/1987) indicted 70 police officers for their lapses in controlling the riots, while the Jain Aggarwal committee appointed in 1990 identified 90 police officers for lapses during the riots. The total number of police officers indicted by the two committees was 147.

In all, 3170 people were arrested out of which 442 people were convicted for their participation in the riots in Delhi. In Haryana, 15 people were convicted, and in other states, 13 were convicted.

It is important to note that the total population of Sikhs in India today is 29 million, out of which 27.7 million live in the State of Punjab (Sikhs 57%, Hindus 38%, and 5% others). Other notable States having large Sikh communities are Haryana (5%), Delhi (5%), and others have less than

5%. The majority of the atrocities committed by the Congress Party members were in the States of Delhi, and Haryana, both states in which they were in power at that time.

We cannot and must not forget that justice must be given to the victims and survivors of these atrocities. However, we cannot allow hooligans, and terrorists or separatists to hijack our agenda of peaceful coexistence both here and in India.

One must not forget the bombing of Air India 182 originating from Toronto to Delhi where 268 Canadian citizens died in 1985. This bombing was carried out by a Sikh separatist based in Vancouver. Inderjit Singh Reyat, a Sikh separatist, was sentenced to 15 years in jail in Vancouver. It was the largest terrorist attack and mass murder originating from Canada. June 23rd (the day of the bombing) has been proclaimed by the Queen of Canada as requesting the people of Canada to observe this day every year as a National Day of Remembrance for the victims of terrorism.

It is important to note that in the State of Punjab, where a majority of Sikhs live, there was no violence and till date Sikhs and Hindus lives in peace and harmony. There is a Congress-ruled, democratically elected Government in Punjab at present which continues to condemn the Khalistani separatist movement.

Sikhs are considered brave and loyal to India and have always enjoyed a special place in the history of India; they continue to do so. We wish to point out that Sikhism was formed out of Hinduism about 400 years ago. When the Khalsa Panth was established, Hindus came forward to give away one member of their family to be a Khalsa. Many Sikh Gurus gave up their lives, and that of their families, to protect Hindus and uphold Hindu Sanatan Dharma against Islamic misrule of the time. Hindus and Sikhs have shared strong bonds of love and respect over the entire history of Sikhism.

Sikhs enjoy a robust democracy in Punjab and they have always been a sizeable community across India. Even today, Delhi has over 5% Sikhs of its total population. All anybody has to do is to go to India and see them living peacefully with their fellow citizens. Sikhs have excelled and led their way in politics, armed forces, sports, writers, actors, poets, and musicians. Farmers of Punjab gave the highest productivity yield. All this, in the context of a united India.

List of prominent Sikhs that held highest positions in India:

- President of India & Supreme Commander-in-Chief: Giani Zail Singh
- Prime Minister of India: Dr. Manmohan Singh
- Cabinet Ministers: Baldev Singh, Swarn Singh, Buta Singh, Surjeet Singh Barnala, Preneet Kaur, Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Maneka Gandhi.
- Speakers of Federal Parliament: Dr. Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Hukum Singh
- Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India: Jagdish Singh Kehar
- There have been several Chief of Defense Forces and recent names Gen. Bikram Singh and current Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa.
- There are many senior Sikhs in Foreign Services and Senior Administrative Officers.

- Some other popular and prominent Sikhs: Khushwant Singh (Writer); Milkha Singh (Sportsman); Dara Singh (Sportsman & Actor); Surinder Kaur (Song-Writer and Singer); Dharmendra (Actor); Harbhajan Singh & B.S. Bedi (Cricketers); Abhinav Bindra (World & Olympic Shooting Gold); Sukhvinder Singh (Singer).

What is of concern to the larger Indo-Canadian community is the attempt by a small number of the Sikh diaspora, led by the now NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, who wants to use the 1984 Sikh riot to push his separatist agenda by calling it a genocide. It is IMPORTANT to note that these separatists are not seeking justice for the victims and survivors. We wish to point out that the Pakistani intelligence agency -ISI is allegedly involved in sponsoring the Khalistani movement in UK, US and Canada towards their nefarious agenda of breaking India. Further, it is a well publicised fact that Jagmeet Singh is under the radar of Indian Intelligence agencies for not only sheltering pro-Khalistani sympathisers in Canada but also for leading an anti-Indian movement. (<https://www.outlookindia.com/newsscroll/canadas-top-dem-leader-jagmeet-a-fundraiser-for-terror-outfits-intel/1648643>) On the basis of investigation by India's external intelligence agency (Research and Analysis Wing), Mr. Singh was denied a visa in 2013 for his anti-India stance. Mr. Singh's involvement in pandering to pro-Khalistani sympathisers is as follows:

- Jagmeet Singh, then Deputy Leader of the Ontario NDP, on June 6, 2016, put forward a motion stating that in the opinion of the Ontario Legislature, the Ontario provincial government should recognize the state-organized violence perpetrated against Sikhs throughout India as genocide. This motion was defeated.
- On the urging of the NDP Leader, MPP Harinder Malhi, moved a second motion on April 6, 2017 passed in the Ontario Legislature to condemn all forms of communal violence, hatred, hostility, prejudice, racism and intolerance in India and anywhere else in the world, including the 1984 genocide perpetrated against Sikhs throughout India.
- What is of concern to the Indo-Canadian community is that this motion was moved when only 39 members were present in the Legislature, out of a total of 107 MPPs. The motion passed with 34 votes in favor, and 5 votes against. This constitutes only 32% of the total number of MPPs at Queen's Park, in contrast, the motion put forward by Jagmeet Singh, which was defeated, had 51% of total members present, which is why it is wrong to attribute this to be a decision of the whole Ontario Legislature.
- Now Jagmeet Singh, as the Leader of the federal NDP, is attempting to use once more his political platform to promote his anti-India agenda. Recently, his parliamentary leader, MP Guy Caron, made a statement in the federal House of Commons in Ottawa, again trying to call the 1984 incident in India as a "Sikh genocide", without knowing the full facts and background of the subject.

A very serious concern to the overall Indo-Canadian community is that, as a Federal Party leader, Jagmeet Singh is not focusing on issues that are important to all Canadians, but rather his personal agenda of promoting his separatist views. Over the past several years, Sikh leaders of all parties in Punjab have condemned him whenever he has spoken on the issue of Punjab's self-determination because there is already a thriving democracy in the State of Punjab. In an interview on CBC, Mr. Singh also refused to condemn the mass-murderer responsible for the biggest terrorist attack on Canadian soil, the Air India bombing. Why? Because the

masterminds, and others, like Mr. Singh, harbor separatist motives (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/jagmeet-singh-air-india-1.4362425>).

Justice is finding its way through the Indian legal system. The Supreme Court of India in August of 2017 decided to open up investigations into 341 cases related to the 1984 riots, which were closed and to be reopened, as they were deemed not properly conducted, with the intention of bringing justice to the victims and survivors of the riots. Congress Party leader Sajjan Kumar who was identified as one of the instigators of the riots was ordered not to leave the country while these investigations are being conducted. Against another Congress Party leader, Jagdish Tytler, who was also identified as one of the main instigators in the 1984 riots and was given a clean sheet in the past, faces fresh charges filed now.

Many steps have been taken by the subsequent Indian governments and the Indian society to preserve congenial relations between different communities and to maintain equality among people of all faiths, including Sikhs.

Upon return to power in 2004, the Congress party selected Mr. Manmohan Singh, a Sikh, as Prime Minister to lead India for the next two terms, 2004 to 2009 and 2009 to 2014, ten years. Since 2014, the new BJP Government in India, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has taken significant measures specifically in support of the Sikh community. The highlight being successfully negotiation with Pakistan for opening the Kartarpur Sahib corridor, a visa-free cross-border passage (Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan and Gurudwara Dera Baba Nanak Sahib in India) for Sikh and Hindu pilgrimage.

The private member Bill 177 by MPP Gurratan Singh, an Act to proclaim 'Sikh Genocide Awareness Week', aims at disturbing harmony and peace among Canadians, Indo-Canadians in particular, as it seeks to proclaim the first seven days of November in each year as Sikh Genocide Awareness Week in a month that Ontario legislature declared as 'Hindu Heritage Month'.

We bring these facts to your attention because Sikhs have always been part of the Indo-Canadian community, with excellent relations extending to families amongst us. We do not want personal agendas to break or poison this harmony, peace, and unity. Only justice will bring successful closure to this terrible tragedy, not playing divisive politics.

*[*Prepared by Indo-Canadian Community who stand for harmony and peace]*