

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN INDIA; THE CASE OF S.S. MANN

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 13, 1995

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the serious human rights problems in India—especially in Punjab and Kashmir. I would like to focus today on the case of Sikh leader Simranjit Singh Mann—a former Member of Parliament. He has been held in an Indian prison for over 2 months now for the simple act of making a speech.

Mr. Mann was arrested after making a speech December 26 in Punjab, Khalistan, in front of a crowd of 50,000 Sikhs. At that time, he called for a peaceful, democratic, non-violent movement to liberate Khalistan. Major Sikh political groups called for an independent Khalistan in October 1987. In his speech, Mr. Mann asked those attending to raise their hands if they agreed with him that a peaceful movement for a free and independent Khalistan is necessary. Every hand was raised.

Mr. Mann is being held without trial or formal charges under India's brutal Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act. This oppressive law has been universally condemned by human rights groups around the world. It allows the Government to detain virtually anyone in prison for nearly 2 years without filing charges or going to court. Sikhs and Moslems detained under this law are routinely tortured and often murdered. How can a country which proclaims itself the world's largest democracy behave in such a manner?

On January 12, I, along with 25 of my colleagues wrote to the Prime Minister of India, P.V. Narasimha Rao, to demand Mr. Mann's release. The letter was signed by prominent members of both parties, Republicans and Democrats. While we disagree on many things, we all agree that everyone around the world is entitled to certain basic human rights—freedom from torture and other violent abuses, dignity, and self-determination.

India's response to our letter was extremely disappointing. Instead of doing the right thing and releasing Mr. Mann, the Government of India dug up old charges against him from 1985—charges long ago discredited—and added them to the charges against Mr. Mann.

India's harassment of Sikh leaders, and its revival of old trumped-up charges against Mr. Mann demonstrate India's fear of the potency of the movement for an independent Khaslistan. The fact that only 4 percent of Sikhs in Punjab participated in State elections organized by the Government in New Delhi in 1992 is a further indication of the Indian Government's weakness in that region. What India must understand is that, if a people are determined to be free, it cannot hold them at the point of a gun forever. India has over a half-a-million armed forces in Punjab to force its will on the Sikh people. It cannot sustain this heavy military presence forever. The army

rules in Punjab with a ruthlessness and brutality that we in this country have a hard time understanding. However, every murder, act of torture, or rape committed by India's Army or paralegal forces will only increase the animosity between these two peoples.

Mr. Mann is the most visible spokesman for the freedom of Khalistan in Punjab. The Government's intimidation of Mr. Mann and other peaceful advocates must not be met with silence by the world's leaders. As long as India continues to practice this kind of repression, the other governments of the world must speak out and protest. A country which practices systematic repression should not receive aid from free countries like ours. The United States must not support tyranny.

The release of S.S. Mann would be a good first step by the Indian Government to demonstrate its commitment to democratic principles. I call for Mr. Mann's immediate release, and I call upon the First Lady, who will be traveling to India at the end of the month, to raise the issue of human rights with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert in the RECORD at this point an article from the January 19 issue of the Indian Express of Chandigarh about our letter to the Prime Minister calling for Mr. Mann's release.

[From the Indian Express Chandigarh, Jan. 19, 1995]

TWENTY-SIX CONGRESSMEN PROTEST TO RAO OVER MANN'S ARREST

WASHINGTON.—Influential members of the new Republican-controlled Congress have fired their first anti-India salvo on urgings from the pro-Khalistan lobby.

Hardly two weeks in the session, the Congress has seen a bipartisan group of 6 lawmakers write to the Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, protesting the detention of Sikh leader Simranjit Singh Mann.

The group has also called for the repeal of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (prevention) Act (TADA). The letter was written on the urging of the Council of Khalistan, the leading pro-Khalistani lobby in the US headed by Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh.

Influence: Although it was initiated by the usual coterie of India-bashers led by New Delhi's most acerbic critic on Capitol Hill, the Republican, Mr. Dan Burton, the difference this time around is that many of them now hold leadership positions and wield considerable influence.

Mr. Burton himself is now a senior member of the House International Relations Committee. Other Republicans who had signed the letter are Mr. Gerald Solomon, the chairman of the Rules Committee, Mr. Phil Crane, the head of the Trade Sub-committee of the powerful Ways and Means Committee and Mr. Tom Bliley, chairman of the Commerce Committee.

Thus, while Mr. Solomon could allow anti-India legislation and resolutions to the floor of the House for debate, Mr. Bliley and Mr. Crane could put a damper on the burgeoning Indo-US commerce and trade relations by calling for punitive action against India on trade matters and keep pushing for laws such as Super 301 and Special 301.

Mann's Arrest: In their letter to Mr. Rao, the legislators said that "we find it very

troubling that a leader of Mr. Mann's stature can be arrested for exercising his freedom of speech."

The legislators said that they had been informed by Dr. Aulakh, that Mr. Mann, a former Member of Parliament and senior leader of the Shiromani Akali Dal party, was arrested on January 5 for "having advocated independence for Khalistan by peaceful means."

They noted that Mr. Mann had urged a rally of 50,000 people to show their support for "a peaceful movement toward an independent state by raising their hands, and that the entire crowd did so."

The legislators wrote that they were concerned that this was not the first time Mr. Mann had been arrested under TADA, and noted that he spent five years in prison during the 1980s "without trial and without formal charges being filed against him in a court of law."

The lawmakers noted that according to press reports, "he was subject to physical and psychological torture during that period—including electric shock and having his beard pulled out in tufts."

Misuse of TADA: In January 1994, Mr. Mann was again arrested under TADA, and over 50 charges filed against him "were later dropped and he was released," they said. The legislators wrote to Mr. Rao that "it appears that the Indian government is using [the] TADA to harass and intimidate Mr. Mann."

The legislators also called on the Prime Minister "to recommend to your Parliament that (the) TADA be reformed to bring it into compliance with generally accepted human rights."

POLICE TRAINING FOR GEORGIA

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 13, 1995

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that the United States is considering providing police training to Georgia. While we would all like to help Chairman Shevardnadze in his fight to stabilize his torn country, I have fundamental reservations about the wisdom of providing police training to Georgia at this time.

Those reservations are spelled out in a letter I sent recently to the Department of State. I ask that my letter, and the Department's response, be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC, February 28, 1995.

Hon. WARREN CHRISTOPHER,
Secretary of State, Department of State, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY. I write to oppose U.S. assistance or training at this time for police forces in the Government of Georgia.

I support carefully crafted police training programs overseas. In particular, I support the Administration's efforts to fight organized crime in Eastern Europe and the N.I.S.

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