

the elderly. Today, 250 private attorneys donate time to the senior law centers in Oregon. In Portland last year, these attorneys donated 1,640 hours. More than 1,000 lawyers in Oregon, and 130,000 lawyers nationwide participate in pro bono activities organized by legal services programs.

However, I know most of the attorneys I worked with would agree that in spite of their hard work, they could not even begin to fill the shoes of the legal services attorneys who could give full time attention to the problems of seniors. The American Bar Association estimates that less than 20 percent of the legal needs of the poor are met. Even with current funding and massive involvement by the private sector, LSC-funded programs are forced to turn away 43 percent of eligible clients. Most legal aid programs turn away women in divorce cases unless they are in danger of their lives from an abuser, and they turn away eviction cases unless the family will go homeless.

Second, the legal problems of the poor, and in my experience, particularly the poor elderly, often require a depth of expertise and a time commitment that is rarely available on a pro bono basis by private attorneys.

Cases that legal service lawyers take up for older Americans range from navigating the bureaucratic maze of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security to working through problems with consumer fraud, age discrimination, pension income, property assessments, and wills and probate.

The fact of the matter about legal services is that in most communities they are the only knowledgeable advocate for poor people who find themselves up against a convoluted Federal bureaucracy or abusive members of their family or community. For every anecdote about a legal services attorney taking up a questionable case, there are a thousand where they helped a poor person just get a fair shake.

Again, I would like to thank the many Members of Congress who recognized the importance of legal services in ensuring this country provides equal justice for all, and fought to ensure the continuance of this program.

The Members who signed onto my letter are the following: STEPHEN HORN, AMO HOUGHTON, FRANK PALLONE, JIM MORAN, TIM JOHNSTON, MILLER, BARBARA-ROSE COLLINS, SHERROD BROWN, MIKE WARD, JOHN SPRATT, JOSE SERRANO, DICK GEPHARDT, SAM GIBBONS, ROBERT TORICELLI, ROBERT MENENDEZ, LOUIS STOKES, RONALD DELLUMS, CHARLES RANGEL, CHARLES SCHUMER, OWEN PICKETT, HAROLD FORD, NITA LOWEY, LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD, SAM FARR, ANDY JACOBS, ELIZABETH FURSE, HOWARD BERMAN, JOHN BALDACCIO, RICK BOUCHER, BOBBY RUSH, BOB CLEMENT, BOBBY SCOTT, JIM FOX, PETER TORKILDSEN, JOHN EDWARD PORTER, GLEN POSHARD, JAMES LEACH, ALAN MOLLOHAN, JERRY COSTELLO, JIM CHAPMAN, KAREN THURMAN, BRUCE VENTO, MARTIN FROST, LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART, NANCY JOHNSON, MAXINE WATERS, MICHAEL FORBES, ALBERT WYNN, CORRINE BROWN, SHERWOOD BOEHLERT, JOHN DINGELL, ROBERT MATSUI, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, CYNTHIA MCKINNEY, JACK QUINN, EARL HILLIARD, SANFORD, BISHOP, RICK LAZIO, MARCY KAPTUR, STEVEN SCHIFF, FLOYD FLAKE, SCOTTY BAESLER, TONY BEILENSON, ANNA ESHOO, EARL POMEROY, GARY ACKERMAN, CAROLYN MALONEY, TIM ROEMER, MARTIN OLAV SABO, JOHN OLVER, WILLIAM CLAY,

ZOE LOFGREN, EVA CLAYTON, CARDISS COLLINS, BEN CARDIN, BARNEY FRANK, ROSA DELAURO, BOB BORSKI, SIDNEY YATES, L.F. PAYNE, ELIOT L. ENGEL, LOUISE SLAUGHTER, STENY HOYER, KAREN MCCARTHY, DALE KILDEE, NEIL ABERCROMBIE, BOB FILNER, PETER DEUTSCH, TOM FOGLETTA, PETER DEFAZIO, RICHARD NEAL, PATSY MINK, LYNN RIVERS, JAMES TRAFICANT, BILL LUTHER, NICK RAHALL, PAUL MCHALE, JANE HARMAN, HENRY GONZALEZ, ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, CHAKA FATTAH, CARRIE P. MEEK, JOHN LEWIS, PETE PETERSON, WILLIAM COYNE, HARRY JOHNSTON, PETE STARK, NORM DICKS, PAT WILLIAMS, DAVID BONIOR, VIC FAZIO, ROBERT ANDREWS, WILLIAM JEFFERSON, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, PETER VISCLOSKEY, BART STUPAK, MAURICE HINCHEY, JACK REED, PAUL KANJORSKY, MARTIN MEEHAN, NORMAN MINETA, SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, THOMAS BARRETT, JERROLD NADLER, BILL RICHARDSON, ESTEBAN TORRES, BERNARD SANDERS, LLOYD DOGGETT, THOMAS SAWYER, TONY HALL, KEN BENTSEN, DAVID SKAGGS, HAROLD VOLKMER, GERALD KLECZKA, NORMAN SISISKY, ED PASTOR, SAM GEJDENSON, JAMES CLYBURN, NANCY PELOSI, BOB WISE, LUIS GUTIERREZ, KWEISI MFUME, JIM MCDERMOTT, RON COLEMAN, BARBARA KENNELLY, MELVIN WATT, PATRICK KENNEDY, XAVIER BECERRA, GEORGE BROWN, ALCEE HASTINGS, CHET EDWARDS, LYNN WOOLSEY, ED MARKEY, HENRY WAXMAN, WALTER TUCKER, DICK DURBIN, PAT SCHROEDER, GERRY STUDDS, TOM MANTON, ED TOWNS, MAJOR OWENS, JULIAN DIXON, JOHN BRYANT, LANE EVANS, JIM OBERSTAR, JOE KENNEDY, DAVID MINGE, NYDIA VELAZQUEZ, LEE HAMILTON, CONNIE MORELLA, FRANK RIGGS, SOLOMON ORTIZ, FRANK TEJEDA, RAY THORNTON, DONALD PAYNE, CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, BEN THOMPSON, BLANCHE LINCOLN.

In addition, Representative HAL ROGERS, chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and Judiciary, made clear early on that he would not support the elimination of the Legal Services Corporation and for that, and for his patience and kindness, we are grateful.

SIKHS DESERVE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 1995

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring the attention of the House to an extremely sensitive situation in India. In a time when civil rights abuses around the world are being condemned, the treatment of the Sikhs by the Indian Government should not go unnoticed.

This shameful treatment has included documented cases of rapes of young women, the beating of old men, and the murder of young boys. Innocent Sikh people have also been subjected to imprisonment without trial, and this practice has been occurring for more than a decade.

The Sikhs are being persecuted in their own homeland. They live in fear everyday, and the freedoms we take for granted simply do not exist in this part of India. Those Sikhs that have the coverage to speak out against these abuses are often arrested and held for no reason.

The imprisonment of innocent Sikhs is made worse by the unfair treatment they receive once in prison. This despicable treatment all too often leads to the murder of innocent prisoners. Many times these deaths go unreported by police, and the bodies are cremated and, therefore, go unclaimed.

I believe this situation deserves and demands the attention of this body. Just as we have supported democratic reforms and the right to self-determination in Eastern Europe, I believe we should support independent and self-determination for Khalistan. The behavior of the Indian Government should not be tolerated, and their treatment of the Sikh people should be condemned.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

PUNJAB (TREATMENT OF SIKHS)

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the continuing persecution of the Sikhs living in their homeland, the Punjab—an issue that I have brought before the House on three previous occasions in the 12 years that I have been a Member of Parliament.

I noticed that nearly 30 hon. and right hon. Members were in the Chamber to listen to a debate about Bosnia, about which British people are not really interested because it is not of direct concern. We now have a debate—at least, a statement—about the position in a Commonwealth country, and the 30 people who were in the Chamber at 10 o'clock have almost all left. I find that surprising and disappointing.

Sikhs in my constituency and throughout the world are worried for relatives and friends who continue to live in that part of India. The rape of young women, the beating of old men and the murder of young boys, together with the imprisonment without trial of thousands of innocent people, have been taking place for more than a decade and continue to this day.

Living in fear in part of everyday existence in the Punjab. The freedom that we take for granted in Britain does not exist in that part of India.

Recent evidence obtained from police files shows that bodies of police suspects murdered in police custody have been cremated as "unclaimed" and that that practice has continued since 1984. The documents that I have with me were given by or bought from police authorities in the Punjab. They list names of people relating to the bodies that have been cremated; yet the Indian authorities denied the existence of such records.

The Indian Express carried a front-page story in its edition of 3 February 1995, in which it said that during the three years 1991-93, the Punjab police dumped about 426 bodies for cremation as "unclaimed" on the Patti Municipal Committee. In many cases, the relatives had not been informed even though the bodies had been identified.

In the same region last year, another 17 "unclaimed" bodies were sent by the police for cremation. Why cremation? Because burnt bodies cannot be examined later for evidence of torture or other abuse.

Police sources have disclosed that, although some of those so-called "missing persons" may have died as a result of torture while in police custody, others may have been eliminated because they had some evidence of police brutality—in other words, they had witnessed what was going on and they had to be put away together with those who were murdered as suspects.

A local human rights group brought that position to the attention of the Indian high court, but its action was dismissed on the grounds that only relatives of murdered individuals could be party to any litigation.

That approach is a bit like telling the relatives of Kuwaitis who disappeared during the occupation of Kuwait to apply to the Iraqi high court in Baghdad for an inquiry to be held into their disappearance.

Investigation into allegations of police torture are rare and, even when such allegations have been established, prosecutions have not taken place. According to recent reports by Amnesty International, there is no evidence of a police officer having been convicted of human rights violations in the Punjab. That says it all about the so-called free and democratic nature of that place and the police reaction to law and order.

The British Parliament has refused to condemn the behavior of the Indian Government, no matter how well documented the facts are. The Government refuse, supposedly because India is a powerful Commonwealth country. Indeed, India refers to itself as the "largest democracy in the world". Perhaps the phrase the "largest hypocrisy" is more appropriate; it is one that I use frequently to describe that Government and that country. The Labour party, with its close links with the Congress party and the Gandhi family, prefers to say nothing at all—I suppose that that is par for the course for that party.

Abuses elsewhere, such as in Bosnia and in parts of the Soviet Union, have led to condemnation by our Government. Why have the Indian Government escaped Britain's wrath? If the Indian Government have nothing to hide, what are they attempting to cover up? Why will they not grant me a visa to enter the country? I reiterate my offer to the Indian Government; if my Sikh friends are telling me lies, I will condemn them outright upon my return from the Punjab; on the other hand, if the Indian Government have been misleading the rest of the world, I will shout the facts from the rooftops upon my return to Britain.

With such a reasonable offer available, perhaps the Government and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will seek to persuade the Indian Government to grant me a visa. I sincerely hope that they will. As the elected representative of some 8,000 Sikhs, it is important that I see the position for myself. I hope that, with the help of the Foreign Office, I shall gain access to that country.

Recognition of the rights of Sikhs who are living in the Punjab is all that Sikhs elsewhere want. That means the right to press for self-determination and to strengthen the call for an independent Kalistan. Sikhs cannot understand how Britain, which is their mother country in some ways, can take such determined action against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and yet stand by and do nothing about human rights abuses in India. They wonder why they are treated differently, but they are also aware that the Punjab is not an oil-rich region. Our Government give the impression that they are being selective in their opposition to human rights abuses. If that impression is to change, our Government must condemn outright the behaviour of the Indian Government.

There should be no aid programme to India, particularly because aid is now tied to good human rights practices. If that is the case, how can we give a penny to the Indian Government which use and abuse the Punjabi people in their own country? If that has no effect, I believe that our Government should break off all diplomatic ties with India. Perhaps the "curry club" lunches between hon. Members in the House and the people who represent the Indian Government should also come to an end. There can be no appeasement of a Government who treat one of their ethnic minority groups in that way.

We are now celebrating the end of the second world war—a war that was fought to preserve freedom of expression, freedom from tyranny and freedom of self-determination. In the Punjab there is no freedom of expression, only its restriction. In the Punjab there is no freedom from tyranny, only the fear of tyranny. In the Punjab there is no freedom of self-determination, only the ability to whisper the word "Kalistan" because to do otherwise would put lives at risk.

For Sikhs in the Punjab, we should read Muslims in Kashmir. Who is causing their suffering? It is none other than the Indian Government. The Sikhs in the Punjab and the Muslims of Kashmir turn to us for help. They believe in the democratic principles upon which our Parliament is based. How much longer must they suffer and how many more excuses will be found to justify ignoring their pleas?

As I said earlier, this is the fourth time that I have raised the issue on the Floor of the House Commons. I suspect that, for the fourth time, my hon. Friend will read a Foreign Office brief and that no further action will be taken. I suspect that there will be no effort to help me to secure a visa to visit India. I suspect that the Government will not raise the issue of human rights with the Indian Government and that they will not consider doing away with the aid programme because of the abuse of human rights in India. I shall probably hear—with great respect to my hon. Friend—platitudes and no firm decisions.

There are about 300,000 Sikhs in this country. The 8,000 Sikhs in my constituency will want to know how Parliament can spend hours talking about Bosnia—which is of no concern to this country in any shape or form: the Balkans were never part of the Commonwealth—and yet can debate this very important issue for half an hour four times in 12 years. I know that my hon. Friend the member of Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) has many Sikhs in his constituency, so I now give way to him to say whatever he wants to say.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I am extremely grateful to my hon. friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) for raising this very important subject. As he said, many thousands of Sikhs live in Gravesend and Northfleet in my constituency. The are very concerned about their families and friends who remain in the Punjab and many hundreds of my Sikh constituents travel to the Punjab every year to visit them. They find the situation there to be extremely insecure. Constituents travel to the Punjab every year to visit them. They find the situation there to be extremely insecure.

In this country we take it for granted that human rights will always be preserved, and that if difficulties arise for ourselves and our families, in extremis we can turn to the police for help. Those are freedoms and rights not easily available to residents in the Punjab. Not only are their families vulnerable to the depredations of the police but, if things go wrong and they are the victims of extortion or violence of any sort, they cannot have recourse to the police authorities, as should be their right.

What remains in the Punjab is an extreme uneasiness for the individual, especially as there has been no proper investigation of the considerable number of cases of people who have disappeared over the years. Families throughout the Punjab—and therefore, by extension, families in this country—have seen their members disappear. Justice does not ensue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us have a little order here. First, I hope that the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) has the Minister's permission too. This is not some-

thing that can just be done off the cuff, on the spur of the moment. Does the hon. Member have the Minister's permission?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): I am perfectly content for the hon. Member for Gravesham to intervene, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was saying that many of my constituents are concerned about the lack of follow-up to the disappearances that have occurred in the Punjab, especially when young men from their extended families have disappeared. For instance, there was a ghastly case of a young man disappearing and all the stories were that he was being held in prison in a police station. The family was eventually advised that the young man had died in custody, yet only a few weeks later he was clearly seen at the window of the prison. When the case was pursued with the prison authorities and the place was eventually checked out, the young man had disappeared yet again.

With my Latin American experience, I know about the concerns about those who have disappeared in Argentina. In the last decade of the 20th century such dreadful things are still happening.

It is especially relevant to raise the matter in the House of Commons, because until 1947 the House was responsible for the conduct of affairs in India. In some ways the agreement made by Mountbatten with the successor authorities, especially Nehru and the Congress party, for the creation of India led to the current position. The great Sikh leaders of the day took at his word and at face value the promises that Mr. Nehru made them concerning the autonomy and the governance of greater Punjab, as it then was—promises that he subsequently broke.

As a result of the haste with which we left India and of the lack of care taken at the time to ensure that the legitimate rights of the Sikhs were sustained, we have a responsibility.

The debate is especially relevant this week, because over the past weekend we have celebrated Victory in Europe day. While I was doing so in my borough of Gravesham, I met an elderly Sikh visiting from India, who told me how he had served as a sergeant-major with the British forces in Italy as part of the imperial Indian army under the Raj.

We owe a debt of gratitude to those people. We owe it to them to speak up for human rights in the Punjab, so that they can live in peace in the land of their forefathers.

Here is the true face of Indian "democracy" revealed for all to see. All over the world, their tyranny is being exposed. These strong statements reveal yet again that India is in truth a brutal, repressive tyranny which tortures and murders routinely. This is the truth that will cause India to collapse. Freedom for Khalistan and all the nations living under Indian occupation is inevitable. (Dr. G.S. Aulakh, President, Council of Khalistan.)

FUNDING FOR THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1994

HON. BILL RICHARDSON

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 1995

Mr. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, it is of great concern to me and other colleagues of