

FORMER MEMBER OF
PARLIAMENT ARRESTED AGAIN

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 28, 2007

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, recently the government of Punjab erected a statue to honor Beant Singh, the late Chief Minister of Punjab, who presided over the murders of over 50,000 Sikhs and the secret cremations of Sikhs in Punjab at the behest of the Indian government. Longtime Sikh activist and former member of Parliament Simranjit Singh Mann showed up with some associates to protest the honor given to this brutal, barbaric ruler. During the protest, they tried to hang a picture of Dilawar Singh, who killed Beant Singh, on the statue. Dilawar Singh is considered by the Sikhs to be a martyr. For this act of protest, they were arrested.

Mr. Mann is also one of the people who was arrested in 2005 for the crime of making speeches in support of Khalistan, the independent Sikh homeland, and raising the flag of Khalistan. I fail to see what crime was committed in any of these acts.

Coupled with the recent arrest of Dr. Sukhpreet Singh Udhoke for publishing articles critical of the Chief Minister, Mann's arrest makes it clear that for minorities such as the Sikhs, free speech, free assembly, and a free press do not exist in India. For minorities such as Christians, Sikhs, Muslims, and others, India is far from the democracy it claims to be. For them, it's a police state just like the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany.

Mann's arrest and Udhoke's arrest violate India's constitution as well as all the principles of freedom and democracy. We cannot stand idly by and let these arrests go by without taking any action.

What can we do? We can and should cut off our aid and trade with India until all people there are allowed to enjoy basic human rights and civil rights. We can and should publicly demand self-determination for the Sikhs of Punjab, Khalistan, the Muslims of Kashmir, the Christians of Nagalim, and all the people seeking freedom in South Asia in the form of a free and fair vote on their status. Self-determination is the essence of democracy. Unfortunately, "the world's largest democracy" denies this essential right to its minority citizens. We have a strong voice. Let us raise it in support of these minorities.

The Council of Khalistan has issued a very informative press release on the arrest of Mr. Mann and his associates.

SIMRANJIT SINGH MANN MUST BE RELEASED

WASHINGTON, DC, June 28, 2007.—The Council of Khalistan today demanded the immediate release of former Member of Parliament Sardar Simranjit Singh Mann and his associates who tried to hang a picture of Beant Singh's assassin on the late—Chief Minister's statue in Jalandhar. Beant Singh, who received less than 7 percent of the vote, was installed as Chief Minister by the Indian government. He presided over the murders of more than 50,000 Sikhs. He was the person who instituted the policy of secret cremation, in which young Sikhs were arrested, murdered in police custody, then declared unidentified and secretly cremated and the families never received their bodies. This barbaric policy was exposed by human-rights

activist Sardar Jaswant Singh Khalra. As a result of his report, Khalra was arrested and murdered while in police custody. His body was also secretly cremated and was never given to his family.

Recently, the Punjab government under Parkash Singh Badal erected a statue of Beant Singh in Jalandhar. Sardar Mann and his associates were arrested when they tried to hang a picture of his assassin, Dilawar Singh, on it.

"The arrest of Simranjit Singh Mann and his associates is another blow to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly in India. basic rights of free people," said Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, President of the Council of Khalistan. "If a group of people can't even hold a peaceful demonstration without being arrested, then what rights do they really have? Where is India's often and loudly proclaimed commitment to democracy? Mann and his associates must be released immediately."

Mann was previously arrested in 2005, along with other Sikh activists, for making speeches in support of Khalistan and raising the Khalistani flag. He came to prominence after the Indian government's military attack on the Golden Temple and 37 other Gurdwaras in June 1984, in which over 20,000 Sikhs were killed, including Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Mann resigned from the police, saying that he could not serve a government that would attack the Golden Temple. In 1989, Mann wrote to the Chief Justice of India, "reiterating my allegiance to the Constitution and territorial integrity of India," according to Chakravayuh: Web of Indian Secularism by Professor Gurtej Singh IAS, which reprints the letter. He also served as a Member of parliament from Punjab around that time. In the mid-1990s, Mann was arrested for peaceful political activities by the Indian government and the Council of Khalistan secured his release. In 2000, Mann came to the United States with the blessing of the Indian government, escorted through the United States and Canada by Amarjit Singh of the Khalistan Affairs Center. He spoke to a group on Capitol Hill in Washington DC and while speaking in New York, he said that the office of the Council of Khalistan in Washington, DC should be closed. Since then, he has continued his political activism in Punjab, Khalistan. Neither Amarjit Singh nor the Khalistan Affairs Center has uttered a word of protest against Mann's arrest. Mann's grandfather gave a siropa to General Dyer, the British general who was in charge of the army that massacred over 1,300 Sikhs at Jalianwalla Bagh. A few years ago, Queen Elizabeth apologized to the Sikhs for the massacre during her visit to Punjab.

"The arrest of Simranjit Singh Mann and his associates shows that there is no freedom of speech in Punjab or in India," said Dr. Aulakh. "This underlines the need for a free, sovereign, independent Khalistan. In a free Khalistan, no one would be arrested for peaceful political activity," he said. "In a free Khalistan, no one would erect a statue to honor those who carry out genocide against the Sikh religion and the Sikh Nation. These arrests should make it clear to Sikhs that even if you cooperate with India, they will use you and throw you away," said Dr. Aulakh.

A report issued by the Movement Against State Repression (MASR) shows that India admitted that it held 52,268 political prisoners under the repressive "Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act" (TADA), which expired in 1995. Many have been in illegal custody since 1984. According to Amnesty International, there are tens of thousands of other minorities being held as political prisoners in India. The Indian government has

murdered over 250,000 Sikhs since 1984, more than 300,000 Christians in Nagaland, over 90,000 Muslims in Kashmir, tens of thousands of Christians and Muslims throughout the country, and tens of thousands of Tamils, Assamese, Manipuris, Dalits, Bodos, and others. The Indian Supreme Court called the Indian government's murders of Sikhs "worse than a genocide."

"The arrests of Simranjit Singh Mann and Dr. Sukhpreet Singh Udhoke show that it is urgent to liberate Khalistan from Indian rule as soon as possible," said Dr. Aulakh. "The time is now to launch a Shantmai Morcha to free Khalistan."

FINANCIAL SERVICES AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

SPEECH OF

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2007

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2829) making appropriations for financial services and general government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes:

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Chairman, I oppose the Sessions amendment to H.R. 2829, the Financial Services Appropriations bill. H.R. 2829 includes a provision to help restore equity to the contracting process by preventing private contractors from having an unfair advantage over Federal Employees when competing for Federal jobs. The Sessions amendment would eliminate that provision from the bill and would continue the administration's policy of playing politics with the civil service system.

The rapid increase in procurement spending in recent years has brought the size of the "shadow government" represented by Federal contractors to record levels. We must stop the misguided effort to send Federal jobs to private contractors at any cost. H.R. 2829 is an important step in that direction.

H.R. 2829, specifically section 738, ensures that Federal employees have the right to compete fairly for their jobs before they are privatized. The bill prevents contractors from gaining an unfair advantage by not providing comparable health and retirement benefits. H.R. 2829 also ensures that agencies, not OMB, have the discretion to decide whether a public-private competition is appropriate.

H.R. 2829 gives Federal employees the right to appeal privatization decisions—a right that contractors already enjoy. We saw this in the Army's reversal of its 2004 decision to allow the in-house Federal workforce at Walter Reed Army Medical Center to perform support services at Walter Reed. When the competing private contractor protested the Army's decision, the Army reversed its decision and resolved the A-76 process in favor of the contractor. If the Army had initially decided in favor of the contractor, the employees would have had no similar right to protest.

This is about fairness. The administration's policy under Circular A-76 puts private contractors on third base before Federal employees even get a turn at bat. Section 738 of this bill helps level the playing field. The Sessions amendment would strip this important language from the bill. I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on the Sessions amendment.