

CHAURAASI KI NAINSAAFI

THE CONTINUING INJUSTICE FOR
THE 1984 SIKH MASSACRE



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Photo Courtesy: Shome Basu

From 31 October to 3 November 1984, over 3,000 Sikh men, women and children were slaughtered by violent mobs, following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Sikh men had their necks ringed with tyres which were set on fire, while others were shot or hacked to death; women were raped and assaulted. Eyewitnesses told official commissions of inquiry that police personnel did nothing to prevent the killings; and some actively participated in the massacre. Several witnesses reported seeing members of the ruling Congress party instigating mobs and taking part in the attacks. A government-appointed judicial commission described the killings as “organized carnage”.

The massacre of 1984 was a national shame, and it was followed by another: over three decades of impunity for perpetrators of these crimes. Survivors reported that the police refused to register complaints in many cases, and in others they registered vague ‘omnibus FIRs’ covering all the offences in a neighborhood. In Delhi, 587 First Information Reports (FIRs) related to the massacre were registered, of which the Delhi police closed 247 as ‘untraced’, meaning that they had been unable to trace any evidence. Over 33 years later, only a handful of police personnel charged with neglecting their duty and protecting the attackers have been punished.

The agony of the survivors of the 1984 massacre have not ended. Their children continue to live with the pain and injustice that followed the violence.

This photo digest presents a glimpse into the lives of these forgotten people. The screams of the victims still echo in the narrow lanes of neighbourhoods where thousands were butchered. It is time for India to ensure that the injustice for massacre of 1984 does not remain a festering sore.

BHAGI KAUR

Migrated from Trilokpuri to Tilak Vihar (Delhi)
Her husband and seven relatives were killed in 1984.

“To everyone else, the massacre took place 32 years ago, but for me it just feels like it all happened yesterday. Almost my entire family was wiped out in front of my eyes, and even after so many years we haven’t got any justice. The culprits are still roaming free.

We are still fighting the consequences of what happened. My life is almost over, but my kids are facing hardships that they don’t deserve. The only hope I have is that maybe my grandchildren will one day see happiness.”



SHANTI DEVI

Migrated from Trilokpuri to Tilak Vihar (Delhi)
Her husband and brother-in-law were killed.

“They killed my husband and brother-in-law with swords. My brother-in-law was lying around with his stomach cut open.

God is witness to my pain. We were begging for water. The images of the atrocities committed in 1984 haunt me even today.”



Photo Courtesy: Shome Basu

LAKSHMI KAUR

Migrated from Mongolpuri to Tilak Vihar (Delhi)
Her husband, five brothers and other relatives were killed.

“They put a tyre filled with petrol around my husband’s neck set it on fire outside a police station.

A middle-aged man from the mob came back at night and tried to touch me inappropriately. When I resisted, he went out and called his entire group. They searched my house and killed all the eight men hiding inside.

I was regularly threatened and harassed so I decided to withdraw my case. I was scared to pursue it.

The government should come and see how we are living.”



Photo courtesy: Karan Sharma

HUKUMI KAUR

Migrated from Trilokpuri to Tilak Vihar (Delhi)
She lost her husband, brother-in-law, father-in-law
and 11 other relatives.

**“Men from my family were burnt alive at the main door
of our house. My husband was killed three days later,
his eyes were gouged out and he was burnt alive.**

**It's been 30 years with no justice whatsoever.
We are helpless.”**



Photo courtesy: Shome Basu

SUNDARI KAUR

Migrated from Sultanpuri to Tilak Vihar (Delhi)
She lost her husband and other family members.

“My husband was an auto driver. He was killed outside somewhere. I didn’t even see his dead body, we only found his burned auto at the police station. I am still suffering from the pain of 1984. Justice isn’t anywhere close.

They looted everything we had, and we were left to die with nothing.”



Photo Courtesy: Shome Basu

DARSHAN KAUR

Migrated from Trilokpuri to Raghbir Nagar (Delhi)
She lost her husband and 11 other family members.

“My husband tried to hide in the kitchen of our house in Trilokpuri. But the mob dragged him out by his hair, and wrapped a quilt around him and put a tyre on him. They then poured oil on him and set him on fire. He was severely burnt, and died later.

The mob mercilessly stripped all the women, who were still in shock and disbelief at the deaths of their husbands and relatives. They were raped by several men countless times.”



Photo Courtesy: Shome Basu

SURJEET SINGH

He lost his father in 1984

“I was in depression all through school and stopped attending because of the bullying. They used to call me Seekh Kabaab

All of a sudden, our lives were ruined and we were unstable. If you lose someone in your family it shakes everyone. Imagine, we have seen our father being burnt alive.”



Photo Courtesy: Paras Manocha

NIRPREET KAUR

She migrated from Delhi to Chandigarh.

“I was filled with rage and agony. Those who massacred Sikhs in 1984 still roam freely.”



GURMAIL SINGH

Raniganj, West Bengal

“I was a truck driver. Several times, I was targeted on the road by marauders, but thankfully I escaped every time. I was being held responsible for something I hadn’t done, just because of my religion. For almost 14 days, I was away from my family.”



Photo Courtesy: Shome Basu

HARBANS SINGH

Bhogal, Delhi

“They burned all the trucks which had Sikh religious symbols on them. They burned one young man after putting a burning tyre around his neck. The police didn’t do anything and just kept watching.”



Photo Courtesy: Shome Basu

JOGINDER KAUR

Migrated from Sagarpur to Raja Garden (Delhi)
Her husband was killed and her mother-in-law
went missing in 1984.

“My husband was attacked with swords and sticks. He was lying on a bed without moving for three days, our children were sitting close to him and not ready to move. A mob entered our home again on the third day of the violence and killed him.

We lost everything in 1984 - our future, our progress... everything. My younger son was in depression and now he has been missing since the last five years. I am in living hell.”



AMARJIT KOUR

Migrated from Tri Nagar to Raja Garden (Delhi).
She lost her husband and brother-in-law.

**“My husband and his brother were killed in Badli.
They were burnt alive by a mob of hundreds.**

**They were throwing some white powder which
immediately caught fire and even exploded.**

We are the forgotten citizens of India.”



AMRAJEET SINGH

Migrated from Mongolpuri to Tilak Vihar (Delhi)
He lost his elder brother.

“My mother was heartbroken after the death of my elder brother. I was only 11-years- old, I couldn’t help her much. I saw them killing people with a weapon used by butchers. The most haunting memories were of the gloves they wore. I saw this middle-aged man wearing gloves and throwing a white powder on Sikhs and our homes which immediately caught fire. They burnt a young man in front of my eyes.”



SANTOKH SINGH

Migrated from Sultanpuri to Tilak Vihar (Delhi)
He lost his father and grandfather.

“My mother dressed me in my sister’s clothes to save me. They were shouting slogans against Sikhs. They called us snakes. They burned my father. Those scenes have not left me. There is no closure to it.”



Photo Courtesy: Shome Basu

SHAMNI KAUR

She migrated from Trilokpuri to Tilak Vihar (Delhi)
She lost 10 relatives in the massacre.

“I have been suffering from the pain of 1984 for more than 30 years. Yet justice isn’t anywhere close. Nobody consoled us then and no one cares for us now.

Does anyone understand how long those three days were? The mobs were shouting slogans like ‘Don’t trust Sikhs. they are traitors’.”



SIT: A DISAPPOINTMENT

In February 2015, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), acting on the recommendations of a government-appointed committee, constituted a three-member special investigation team (SIT), comprising two senior police officers and a retired judge. The SIT's terms of reference included reinvestigating criminal cases filed in Delhi in relation to the 1984 Sikh massacre, and filing charges against accused persons where there was sufficient available evidence.

The SIT was given six months to complete this work. However, its functioning was marked by an almost-complete lack of transparency and baffling delays. For over two years, the SIT sought one extension after another. In 2017, it finally stated that it had closed 241 cases and filed charges in just 12 cases.

In June 2017, Amnesty International India filed a Right to Information application seeking information on the reasons for the closure of cases by the SIT. No information was provided. In August, the Supreme Court set up a panel comprising two former judges to examine the SIT's decisions to close cases.

33 years after the massacre of thousands of Sikhs in broad daylight, only a few of those responsible have been brought to justice. No police officer has been convicted. Not a single prosecution for rape has taken place.

The impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of the 1984 massacre has been used to justify the lack of progress in punishing those responsible for other organized massacres and communal riots in India. As long as the perpetrators of the 1984 massacre remain unpunished, the rule of law in India will remain weakened.



RECOMMENDATIONS

JUSTICE NOW!

Amnesty International India stands with the victims and survivors of the 1984 massacre in their tireless campaign for justice. Amnesty International India urges authorities in the government of India to:

EFFECTIVE INVESTIGATION

- Ensure that all those suspected of involvement in the killings, rapes and other crimes, including those with command responsibility, are prosecuted.
- Provide adequate protection to victims and witnesses to ensure that investigations and prosecutions can proceed without fear of reprisals.

COMPREHENSIVE REPARATION

- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for reparation in full consultation with the victims and survivors of the 1984 Sikh massacre, including young people, women and girls, and civil society groups working with them. This should be in line with the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law.
- Rehabilitation plans should entitle all persons who suffered physical injuries or psychological problems, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights during the 1984 violence to reparation.
- Reparation should include compensation for any economically assessable damage, including lost opportunities such as employment, education, and social benefits; and material damages and loss of earnings, including loss of earning potential.
- Issue a formal public apology on behalf of the Government of India, including an acknowledgement of the facts and acceptance of responsibility.

LEGAL AND POLICY REFORMS

- Enact a robust law to prevent and respond to communal and targeted violence, which incorporates international human rights principles of superior and command responsibility, relief, return, and resettlement.
- The law should also recognize the right to remedy and reparation for all persons affected by communal and targeted violence, including internally displaced people. It should provide for immediate rescue and relief in the case of communal or targeted violence. It should recognize that the right to reparation includes restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.
- Establish a comprehensive and adequately resourced victim and witness protection programme at the central and state levels, which should not be associated with state agencies such as the police.
- Undertake comprehensive police reforms to insulate the police from political interference and pressure. Work with state governments to establish police complaint authorities at the state and district levels to investigate complaints about police misconduct. Work with state governments to establish fixed tenure for police officers, and set up a board to monitor recruitment, appointment and transfer of police.



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