

MEDIA ADVISORY

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“A mockery of justice” *The “disappearance” of Jaswant Singh Khalra*

Amnesty International today issues a brief report about the case of Jaswant Singh Khalra, who “disappeared” after being picked up by Punjab police. The human rights organization has serious concerns about the legal process in bringing the police officers responsible for his “disappearance” to justice.

A human rights defender, Khalra had been part of a campaign to highlight the plight of hundreds of people who “disappeared” after being arrested by the Punjab police during the 1980s and early 1990s. Those who now seek to defend his rights are being threatened and witnesses are being intimidated.

Amnesty International’s report details the organization’s concerns at allegations that accused police officers have attempted to suppress evidence through intimidation of witnesses and those campaigning for justice and expresses fears that attempts are being made to prevent further investigations and deny justice.

On the eve of the next hearing in the case – 28 April at the Special Court of the Central Bureau of Investigation in Patiala, Punjab – Amnesty International is calling for immediate investigations into the allegations of intimidation and harassment, followed by prompt action against officials. The organization is also calling for the protection of witnesses and the suspension of police officials accused of involvement in Khalra’s disappearance.

India was a member state of the 54th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights which, in March this year, adopted by consensus the draft UN *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms*, providing for the protection of the activities of human rights defenders. Amnesty International’s report calls on the Indian government to give a powerful signal that human rights defenders in India will be given full protection to continue their invaluable work.

Jaswant Singh Khalra is one of the human rights defenders featured in Amnesty International’s campaign to promote the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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For more information, a copy of the full report (AI Index: ASA 20/07/98) , or to arrange an interview, please call: Amnesty International Press Office: +44 (0) 171 413 5729, or mobile +44 (0) 468 670 247