

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of extrajudicial execution

21 January 1992

INDIA:

Gurmeet SINGH and Harpreet SINGH

Gurmeet Singh, son of Ranbir Singh from Khokar village, Sangrur district, president of Des-Punjab Student's Union and the editor of a Punjabi paper "Paigam" was reportedly arrested by police from Sangrur at 3 pm on 21 January 1992. He was arrested with Harpreet Singh, son of Joginder Singh, from Bhagike village, Faridkot district, who is also a student. Both are Sikhs. They were travelling in a Fiat car, registration number CH 6826, and were on their way to Salam when they were stopped by police at Chowk Melha. They both belong to the Communist Party of India (Marxist - Leninist), Pangram faction.

Two members of the same group were arrested on 15 January 1992, and killed the same night by what a local civil liberties group alleged was a "fake encounter" with the police. Fears have been expressed that Gurmeet Singh and Harpreet Singh might meet the same fate.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International regularly receives reports of "disappearances", unacknowledged detention and extrajudicial killings of people arrested in Punjab on suspicion of being members or sympathizers of one of the Sikh opposition groups advocating a separate Sikh state, "Khalistan". In some cases the detainees are eventually found to have died in custody, while others are found to have been deliberately killed in custody although official reports say they died in "encounters" with the police. Even though legal safeguards against unacknowledged detention exist in India's ordinary criminal law and procedural code, they are often simply not adhered to and prisoners are held in illegal detention for weeks and sometimes months under special legislation granting the security forces arbitrary powers to arrest and detain people without ordinary legal safeguards.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams and airmail letters:

- expressing concern about reports that Gurmeet Singh and Harpreet Singh were taken away on 21 January 1992 by policemen believed to be from the Chowk Melha police post;
- expressing fears for their safety and seeking assurances that Gurmeet Singh and Harpreet Singh are being humanely treated and are granted full legal safeguards while in custody;
- asking for details of any charges against Gurmeet Singh and Harpreet Singh.

APPEALS TO

1) Mr Surinder Nath
Governor of Punjab
Office of the Governor
Chandigarh
Punjab
INDIA

Telegrams: Punjab State Governor, Chandigarh, Punjab, India

Salutation: Dear Governor

2) Mr K. P. S. Gill
Director General of Police
Police Headquarters
Chandigarh
Punjab
INDIA

Telegrams: Director General Police, Chandigarh, Punjab, India

Salutation: Dear Director General

COPIES TO:

Punjab Human Rights Organisation (Regd.)
Head Office
H. No. 22, Sector 2
Chandigarh (U.T.)
Punjab
INDIA

and to diplomatic representatives of India in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 March 1992.