

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

**AI Index: ASA 20/54/92**

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**UA 330/92**    **Illegal Detention/Fear of Torture/  
Fear of Extrajudicial Execution/Harassment**

**22 October 1992**

**INDIA:**        **Harjit Singh  
and his family**

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Amnesty International is concerned at reports that Harjit Singh, son of Kashmir Singh of Village Buttar Kalan is still being illegally detained by the security forces in Punjab. He was reportedly seen by a relative in an interrogation centre in Amritsar, Punjab, on 17 October 1992 although the authorities have denied that they are holding him.

Harjit Singh, a married man with two children, was arrested on 29 April 1992 while travelling on a bus. He was detained in Ghagar Bhanar police station until 1 May.

There are reports that during this period he was tortured and that his arms and legs were broken. He was then transferred to Metha police station where he remained for three or four days. A police officer there allegedly told a local village leader, who was pleading for Harjit Singh's release, that he was unable to release Harjit Singh because he had suffered severe injuries. From there Harjit Singh was taken to Mal Mandi Interrogation Centre, Amritsar. On 12 May the police issued a statement that while taking Harjit Singh to recover weapons, there had been an encounter with terrorists and Harjit Singh had been killed. His alleged ashes were given to his parents the following day.

A warrant officer was instructed to establish the whereabouts of Harjit Singh by the High Court in Chandigarh on 17 October 1992. The warrant officer was refused entry to the interrogation centre for over an hour during which time a relative accompanying him stated that he saw Harjit Singh from a window in the first floor of the building. When they were allowed into the building, they found all the rooms to be empty and the constable told them that the building was only used for officers' meetings.

Harjit Singh's family have reportedly fled their home for fear of police harassment.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Amnesty International regularly receives reports of "disappearance" and unacknowledged detention 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 believed to have been deliberately killed in custody although official reports say they died in "encounters" with the police, or that they "escaped". 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 unacknowledged detention for weeks and sometimes months.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English in your own language:**

- urging the government to establish the whereabouts of Harjit Singh;
- expressing concern at reports that he is being illegally held and urging that, if he is being detained, he be released if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial under ordinary procedures of criminal law;

**Page 2 of UA 330/92**

- expressing concern at reports that he has been badly tortured and seeking assurances that if he is still in custody he will be humanely treated;
- expressing concern at the security forces lack of respect for the High Court's orders in hindering the warrant officer's search of the interrogation centre for Harjit Singh;
- expressing concern at the reported harassment of Harjit Singh's family and seeking assurances for their safety.

**APPEALS TO**

1) 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**

2) Mr Surinder Nath  
Governor of Punjab  
Raj Bhavan  
Chandigarh  
Punjab  
India

**Telegrams : Punjab State Governor, Chandigarh, Punjab, India**

**Faxes: + 91 172 540 647**

**Salutation: Dear Governor**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

1) Mr Beant Singh  
Chief Minister of Punjab  
Office of the Chief Minister  
Chandigarh  
Punjab  
India

2) Bhupinder Singh Mann  
Advocate, Chandigarh High Court

Chandigarh  
Punjab  
India

and to diplomatic representatives of India accredited to your country.

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