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# FACT SHEET

## 35<sup>th</sup> Year of Operation Blue Star Against Sikh Vatican

- What:** Sikh Community's Public Event - **June 6, 2019 at Lincoln Memorial, Washington DC. (5:00 to 7:00 PM)**
- Who:** "Sikhs For Justice" (SFJ) [www.sikhsforjustice.org](http://www.sikhsforjustice.org) with the support of Sikh Gurdwaras across United States is organizing the June 6<sup>th</sup> event. More than 3,000 members of the Sikh community are likely to be present.
- The United States of America is home to almost a million Sikhs and a great majority of American Sikhs have been granted asylum by the US Government due to the persecution and atrocities committed upon them or their families by the Indian government in retaliation to Sikhs' movement for right of self-determination, commonly known as Khalistan movement, during the past three decades.
- Why:** **Marking** the 35th year of Indian Army's attack "Operation Blue Star" against Golden Temple in June 1984.
- Condemning** attack on the holiest Sikh shrine and massacre of the Sikh pilgrims.
- Re-affirming** Sikhs right of self-determination under UN Conventions and International Law.
- Highlighting** democratic initiative of holding first ever unofficial Referendum 2020 [www.referendum2020.org](http://www.referendum2020.org) among the global Sikh community on the question of secession of Punjab from India, under the principle of right of self-determination for all peoples.
- Background:** In June 1984, Indian Army carried out "Operation Blue Star", damaging Golden Temple, destroying Sri Akal Takhat Sahib – the highest temporal seat of Sikhism and massacring thousands of pilgrims who had congregated to observe the Martyrdom Day of the 5th Guru Sri Arjun Dev Ji.
- Although, the ostensible aim of the Indian Government was to kill the leadership of the movement for right to self-determination, however, the level of force used in the attack was utterly incommensurate with this limited and eminently attainable aim.
- Since, one of the holiest day in June was chosen to launch the Operation Blue Star, Sikhs believe that the real aim of the military action was to penalize the community for its support to Khalistan – a movement for right of self-determination.
- Seventy thousand troops, in conjunction with the use of gunship helicopters, tanks and chemical gas, killed thousands of Sikh pilgrims including women and children. The highest temporal seat of Sikhism, was reduced to rubble and the Sikh Reference Library, an irreplaceable collection of books, manuscripts, and artifacts bearing on all aspects of Sikh history was destroyed.
- The Operation Blue Star was justified by Indian authorities as necessary action to flush out militants, fighting for an independent Sikh homeland, from the Golden Temple complex. General S. K. Sinha, the GOC of the Indian Army who was sacked just before the attack, had advised the government against the Operation Blue Star and also criticized the Indian Government's claim that the attack was the "last resort".
- During the Operation Blue Star, besides massacring more than 10,000 Sikh pilgrims, India also committed serious violations of UN's Protocol on "The Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II) of 8 June 1977 and violation of "Definition of Aggression United Nations General Assembly Resolution 3314 (XXIX) - 14 December 1974.
- Media was denied access and strict censorship was imposed to hide the blatant violations committed by the Indian security forces during Operation Blue Star. An Associated Press (AP) reporter Baramha Chellaney was prosecuted by the Indian government on the charges of "sedition" because he had published the reports exposing the killing of Sikhs carried out in cold blood by the security forces. Quoting medical sources who had conducted the post-mortem, **Chellaney reported that during the Operation Blue Star, Indian forces had killed scores of young Sikhs from close range with their hands tied behind their backs.** (See <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Defying-censorship-the-reporter-who-exposed-the-killings/article12067789.ece>)

Till today, United States of America has not condemned the Operation Blue Star despite the gravity and scale of human rights violations committed by the Indian Government against the Sikh people and their holiest place of worship in June 1984.

Emboldened by the lack of condemnation of Operation Blue Star from the world community, India continued with genocide of Sikhs killing over 30,000 in November 1984 and more than 100,000 through extra judicial killings with complete impunity in the name of counter insurgency during the following decade.

Besides massacre, genocidal attacks, and desecration of religious place by the Indian governments, the religious identity of Sikhs also faces **existential threat** in India. In a blatant violation of religious freedom, Article 25(b) of the Constitution of India labels Sikhs as Hindus, resulting in application of Personal and Family Laws (such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, guardianship, etc.) emanating from Hindu religious to Sikhs in India.

What lies at the bottom of the controversy between the disgruntled Sikhs and Indian Government is the Explanation II to Article 25 of the constitution of India which classifies Sikhs as Hindus. Offended by this constitutional assault on the independent status of Sikhism and amalgamation of Sikh identity by a self proclaimed democratic and secular republic, Bhindranwale initially lead the movement for abolition of Article 25 which ultimately culminated in demanding secession of Punjab, the historical homeland of Sikhs, from India

There is ample evidence to conclude that June 1984 attack and massacre at the Sikh Vatican was carried out with the sole purpose of crushing the growing movement for Sikhs' right of self-determination, a right guaranteed by the UN Charter and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Therefore, June 6<sup>th</sup> holds a special place in the Sikh history, collective consciousness and struggle for right of self-determination. Since 1984, every year Sikhs around the globe commemorate June 6 in remembrance of victims of India's brutal military action and re-affirm Sikhs have a right of self-determination.

<b>Civilians/Pilgrims Killed in Operation Blue Star at the Golden Temple</b>	
Source	Number
Indian Government White Paper	493
AP, Reuters and New York Times (11 June 1984)	1,000
BBC - Mark Tully – Amritsar, Mrs. Gandhi's Last battle	2,093
Amritsar crematorium worker	3,300
Chand Joshi (Bhindranwale: Myth and Realty)	5,000
AR Darshi (The Gallant Defender)	5,000 at least
Eyewitnesses	8,000 at least

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