

Sikh protesters say that Turner is sympathetic to their views

OTTAWA (CP) — A demonstration by about 250 Sikhs on Parliament Hill yesterday afternoon was told that the views of new Liberal Leader John Turner are "very sensitive to the Sikhs."

R. S. Chahal, a Calgary delegate to the weekend Liberal leadership convention, told the crowd of Sikhs from Ottawa, Montreal and Kingston, that he spoke to Mr. Turner on Saturday and "hopefully we will see from the Canadian Government very favorable action."

The demonstration denounced Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her Government for the attack by the Indian army on the Sikh Golden Temple in the Punjab region of India, which left hundreds dead nearly two weeks ago.

Men, women and children marched together chanting slogans against the Indian Government and hoisted placards saying "Indira's democracy drips with blood" and "Death to Indira dynasty."

The Ottawa Sikh Society, in a letter to the Indian High Commission, is urging the Indian Government to cease all military actions against Sikhs, release all prisoners captured, and show empathy toward Sikh soldiers who deserted.

Meanwhile, in Winnipeg on Saturday, more than 600 men, women and children from the Sikh community marched through the city's downtown to protest against the recent killing of hundreds of their fellow Sikhs in India.

As curious bystanders looked on, demonstrators quietly filed past, carrying signs and banners denouncing Mrs. Gandhi and calling for independence for the Punjab.

Escorted by police on motorcycles, the peaceful demonstration followed on the heels of a similar protest a week ago at the Manitoba Legislature.

Last week's protest took place during a peace march organized by nuclear disarmament groups. It sparked concern because an effigy of Mrs. Gandhi was burned without a fire permit and a number of demonstrators carried swords.

While an effigy of Mrs. Gandhi was beaten with sticks, nothing was burned at Saturday's march and only five holy men, dressed in loose-fitting blue costumes and black turbans, carried sheathed, ceremonial swords.

Organizer Kuldip Singh said the purpose of Saturday's demonstration was to make Canadians aware of what was taking place in India and to call on the Canadian Government to send a fact-finding mission to examine the circumstances surrounding the attack on the Sikh temple.

The Sikhs, a religious minority in India, are seeking to set up an independent state in the Punjab.



Young Winnipeg Sikhs participate in demonstration condemning temple attack.

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