

# Provisional government calls for sanctions against India

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By SUZANNE GOLDENBERG

A government-in-exile of Khalistan, formed in the wake of the military raid two weeks ago on the Sikhs' sacred Golden Temple in Amritsar, is calling for economic sanctions and political pressure against India.

"Canada should not be giving more money to India. We should cut off all aid to India," Kuldip Singh, who says he is the shadow government's consul-general to Toronto, said at a news conference on Saturday.

He also suggested people boycott Air India flights to that country.

The new provisional government sees public pressure and diplomacy as key to raising the status of the Sikh minority in India, he said.

Although the provisional government is new, he said Khalistani passports were first issued in 1976. Khalistan is the name given to an independent Sikh state.

"The Indian Government, by raiding the Golden Temple, has declared itself to be at war with the government of Khalistan and the Sikhs," said Darshan Singh, who says he is a representative of the Khalistani government.

"We consider ourselves at war with the Indian Government."

He said uneasy relations between the Sikh-dominated Punjab state and India since 1947 are based on years of deception. "The Hindu Government used our good faith."

Punjab was the last state to fall under British colonialism and therefore has a history of independence, he said.

According to members of Toronto's Sikh community at the conference, including those who said they were representatives of the Khalistani government, India's suppression of Sikhs is indicative of the Government's hostility to other religious minorities.

They also accused the Indian

Government of doctoring news releases to discredit the Sikh separatist movement.

Kuldip Singh said the death toll for the assault on the Golden Temple — and 45 other temples around Amritsar — was as high as 15,000. (The Indian army says 492 Sikhs and 84 soldiers died in the assault on the Golden Temple, while independent reports put the toll at more than 1,000 Sikhs and 200 soldiers.)

He said reports of recent findings of drugs and arms caches in the temple are untrue and are part of India's propaganda machine.

Contrary to early reports, he denied that Sikh separatist leader

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale committed suicide. "His body was riddled with 72 bullets."

"The reports we are getting from India are not as they are," said Amrit Singh, who served as translator for a man who fled to Canada from Punjab five days ago.

The 24-year-old, who refused to give his name for fear of reprisals against his family in India, travelled undercover in police vans to make his escape.

The man said he was forced to cut his beard and hair and remove his turban to disguise himself.

He said young Sikhs are routinely taken by the military and "no one knows what happens to them unless they return home."

"Should a number of Sikhs be seen standing together, they are simply shot with no questions asked," the man said. A member of the Sikh Student Federation, he said many of his friends were killed in the latest Government assault.

During the raid on the Golden Temple, the man was in his house 12 kilometres from the city. He said sounds of fighting are routine in that area, so he did not realize what was happening.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said in a radio interview yesterday that she ordered the assault on the Golden Temple in the interest of a unified nation.

"That kind of anti-social and anti-national action (by Sikh extremists in the temple) cannot be tolerated. Obviously, there was something going on there that was not in the national interest," she said on the Canadian Broadcasting Corp.'s Sunday Morning program.

She said attempts to reach an agreement with Sikhs in the temple failed. "We were trying to talk to them. We felt that maybe if we could reach an agreement with them, they could stop it themselves." She said a bid for a settlement failed because of "differences among themselves (the Sikhs), perhaps rivalries, and maybe some of them were afraid."

Mrs. Gandhi said she would win back the loyalty of Sikhs by teaching them the truth. "It's a question of healing their wounds. I mean, they may be hurt, but it doesn't necessarily mean they're alienated."