

# MRS. GANDHI VISITS CAPTURED TEMPLE

Priest Is Said to Urge Her to  
Withdraw Army and Allow  
Sikh Pilgrims in Again

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NEW DELHI, June 23 — Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the Sikh shrine that was the scene of fighting 16 days ago. She was reported to have heard demands from the head priest that the army be withdrawn and pilgrims be allowed to return.

Amritsar itself, which had been the center of a Sikh movement aimed at greater autonomy for Punjab state, was described as returning to normal.

The army continued its operation to round up Sikh militants. Seventeen were arrested Friday and today, and one person wanted in at least six murder cases was said to have been killed by the police in Jullundur district.

Residents of Amritsar arriving here, along with Indian reporters, said the climate of fear that had gripped the city for months had eased.

Nearly 600 people, according to official reports, and perhaps more than 1,000, according to other estimates, were killed during the army's invasion of the Golden Temple compound, which militants had turned into a fortress. Among the dead was a Sikh leader, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

## Half-Hour Visit to Temple

Mrs. Gandhi, accompanied by Government radio and television reporters, spent half an hour in the temple. She touched her shrouded head to the floor of the gold-sheathed inner sanctum, tendered an offering of rupees and, while musicians chanted prayers, she took a mouthful of the mush that is used in what corresponds to communion for Sikhs.

The scene was televised, apparently as part of an effort to mollify Sikhs angry over the invasion of the temple.

During the visit, Mrs. Gandhi was told that some Sikh scriptures had been damaged during the battle. Giani Sahib Singh, the head priest, demanded that the army be pulled out and that worshippers be allowed to use the temple during fixed hours.

The Punjab Government said it would soon begin taking busloads of pilgrims to the temple to quell misgivings about its condition.

The head priest also urged Mrs. Gandhi to bring about an early release of innocent people arrested during the temple raid and in army sweeps through the Punjabi countryside. Some official sources say that perhaps 200 of the nearly 1,600 people arrested in the temple raid are innocent pilgrims and that more than 100 are temple employees. More than 4,000 have been reported arrested in all, and many of them are expected to be released after screening.

## Lower Estimate Being Offered

Some Government officials have now returned to an estimate, made before the army moved into Punjab on June 2, that no more than 400 to 500 militants were operating from the temple. The identity of the others is unclear, though they are presumed to include criminals, fugitives, and fringe members of the Bhindranwale group.

As normal traffic in and out of Punjab picked up, a longtime Sikh resident of Amritsar arrived here Friday and reported that "in general, there is a very, very big sense of relief in Amritsar."

Just before the army action, he said, Sikh militants capitalizing on the situation had created a climate of fear throughout the city and its surrounding villages.

The resident said Sikhs and Hindus alike felt the relief, although a residual fear remained that militants might still seek revenge on people who were not with them.

At the same time, the Amritsar resident said, "people are afraid that when the army leaves, there will be further looting and killing."

The resident also said that, according to preliminary reports, army troops in both the city and the countryside were behaving with restraint and courtesy. Although the soldiers searched houses at will, first reports said, there was said to be little or no brutality.

Some people were reported killed in curfew violations, however.

A team of reporters from the Press Trust of India, a news agency, also reported from Amritsar that there were visible signs of relief among citizens and that, while there was uneasy silence, there seemed to be no tension.

Business and social activity was said to be reviving rapidly, in contrast to the weeks before the army crackdown, when militants struck at will, business in some places came to a halt, and people began to stay indoors.

Foreigners, including reporters, are not allowed into Punjab, which for all the reported signs of normalcy still remains essentially under martial law.



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**MRS. GANDHI VISITS SITE OF SIKH RESISTANCE:** Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India tours Golden Temple in Amritsar, where Sikh separatists confronted Indian troops on June 5. Hundreds died in the clash. Page 4.