

Sikhs march in London, threaten to kill Gandhi

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Special to The Globe and Mail

LONDON — More than 20,000 Sikhs from all over England and Scotland converged on central London yesterday in a massive display of anger at the Indian Army's storming of their holiest shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

The demonstrators, their five turbaned leaders brandishing ceremonial swords, marched through the streets to chants of "death to Indira Gandhi" and "blood for blood." The protest, largest ever organized by Sikhs in Britain, was peaceful but tense and there were clear signs that the assault on the Golden Temple and the death of the fundamentalist leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, had unleashed a new mood of militancy in the Sikh community, largest outside India.

Until last week, there was little support in Britain for Sikh separatists who want to transform Punjab into an independent state to be called Khalistan. But at yesterday's demonstration, thousands of people carried bright orange banners and wore orange ribbons to symbolize their support.

Beant Singh, general secretary of the biggest Sikh temple in the West, the Siri Gurusingh Sabha, summed up their feelings like this: "We have no future in India. There is no alternative now but to form a separate state." Another Sikh spokesman said: "We were all moderate. But all that has changed. We'll make sure that Mrs. Gandhi pays for what she's done, sooner or later."

Yesterday's demonstration was the climax of several days of sometimes violent protest. Indian banks and diplomatic offices in four cities, including London, had been fire-bombed and furious Sikhs had tried to set fire to Hindu temples in the London suburb of Southall where, until now, Sikhs and Hindus had lived peacefully side by side.

So there was a heavy police presence along the route of the march and exceptional measures had been taken to protect the Indian High Commission. When the demonstrators approached the building, they found access

blocked by six rows of steel barricades and several lines of policemen.

Tempers flared as the High Commission loomed into sight. The chanting of the demonstrators rose to a high pitch. They waved their fists at the empty building and an effigy of Indira Gandhi was ceremonially burned.

But there was none of the violence police had anticipated, though six arrests were made.

However, Indian officials in Britain, many of whom are now under police protection, are concerned that there may be worse to come. It seems they may have reason. A new focus of Sikh resistance to the Indian Government sprang up over the weekend with the establishment in London of a Sikh government-in-exile. Its base is a modest suburban house and its self-styled president Dr. Jagjit Singh Chohan, a former deputy speaker of the Punjab State Assembly. His followers have threatened to exact revenge for the desecration of the Golden Temple and the deaths of hundreds of Sikh militants at the hands of the Indian Army.

"The martyrdom of our brothers cannot go forgotten," he said.

Meanwhile, extremist Sikh youth organizations in Britain are reported to be circulating "hit lists" of people they describe as agents of Indira Gandhi.

They have also vowed to carry out attacks on Indian airline offices and diplomatic premises throughout the country.

Beant Singh warned yesterday against dismissing these as empty threats.

"I think it is very likely there is a hit list. We Sikhs are a non-violent people. We have been protesting in non-violent ways for 30 years. But now Indira has killed our people and it has turned into a violent fight. There is no other way left."

There are signs, too, that extremist Sikhs in Britain may have even more prestigious targets in their sights. A Sikh businessman in London is rumored to have put a price of \$75,000 on the heads of Mrs. Gandhi and her son, Rajiv. Sikh sources say the reward will be paid to whoever delivers her and her son to Amritsar's Golden Temple — dead or alive.



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Some of the thousands of Sikhs who paraded through London streets yesterday are seen

passing the Law Courts. One younger demonstrator is carrying a mock machine gun.

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